

RELATEDNESS IN PASTORAL COUNSELING AND ITS DISTORTIONS
THROUGH POWER, AUTHORITY AND OBEDIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Relatedness in Pastoral Counseling and its Distortions through Power, Authority, and Obedience

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Both recent history and current social problems reveal many instances where the power and authority of clergy and counselors have been abused. As the pastoral counselor combines some aspects of the power and authority bases of both clergy and secular counselors, it is important to investigate the particular dangers and possible resources in the pastoral counseling relationship. Because of the inherent power imbalance in counseling relationships, there is always a special risk of abuse of power and authority.

This project examines healthy relatedness and its distortions through power, authority and obedience. This project integrates selected psychological and theological understandings of healthy relatedness, power, authority and obedience and then applies these concepts to the counseling relationship.

Chapter 1 first presents Erich Fromm's concept of healthy relatedness. It then looks at distortions of relatedness as described by Fromm, Alice Miller, Karen Horney

and Alfred Adler.

Chapter 2 draws on Paul Tillich and Bernard Loomer as they try to reintegrate love with power and justice. A relational view of power is presented.

Chapter 3 discusses grace, human nature, the will and relatedness. It argues that a more relational worldview is needed to help heal distortions of relatedness caused by power issues.

Chapter 4 draws on a variety of therapists to seek correctives to power distortions found in the counseling relationship. Carl Goldberg's ideas on power imbalances and equity, and Virginia Satir's theory of the dynamics within the counseling relationship are both presented. A discussion of the importance of grace in healing (for both client and counselor) concludes this chapter.

Chapter 5 outlines pitfalls and possibilities for pastoral counselors and presents scriptural and theological resources for reflecting on power, authority and obedience issues. The concluding chapter suggests some directions for future action and study.

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
Introduction	1
1. Relatedness, Power, Authority and Obedience in Psychological Theories	6
Introduction	6
Erich Fromm	7
Alice Miller	15
Karen Horney	18
Alfred Adler	21
Concluding Comments	23
2. Relatedness, Power, Authority and Obedience in Christian Theology	31
Introduction	31
Paul Tillich	32
Bernard Loomer	38
Conclusion	44
3. Grace, Human Nature, and Relatedness	48
4. Relatedness, Power, Authority and Obedience in the Counseling Relationship	68
A Risky Relationship	68
A Treatment Plan	72
Power Imbalances and Equity	75
The Client/Counselor Relationship	80
Responsibilities of the Counselor	83

Empathy	88
Role Modeling	89
Types of Counselor Power	92
Grace in Counseling	93
5. Pitfalls and Possibilities for Pastoral Counselors	99
Pitfalls	99
Possibilities	102
Scriptural and Theological Resources	102
6. The Next Step	109
A Step Back	109
The Steps We've Taken	111
Stepping Forward	112
Bibliography	115

INTRODUCTION

This project has emerged out of my personal struggles in searching for my identity as a pastoral counselor -- an identity that would integrate my theology, my psychological beliefs and my personal identity. As I observed fellow students engaged in this same struggle, it occurred to me we were on a three-part journey.

The first two parts of our journey were abstract and theoretical. We were looking for theory and techniques to use in counseling. We needed both organizing concepts and specific tools to use when meeting with clients. This type of information can be taught in classrooms.

The third part of our journey, however, was more difficult to teach and to learn. Rather than requiring abstract thinking, this part of the journey required emotional sensitivity, intuitiveness and an open heart. This last part of the journey was learning how to establish healthy relationships with clients. Since every client (and every counselor) is unique, this can be a difficult problem. This third part of the journey is crucial, however. All our concepts and techniques are useless if we cannot establish a healthy and trusting relationship with clients.

I had already been sensitized to some of the patriarchal assumptions in Freudian theory which can be a special danger in counseling with women. However, the pervasiveness of similar problems in most counseling models didn't strike me until I was taking a course on "Understanding Domestic Violence." We were exposed repeatedly to case studies where the abuses of power, authority and obedience were extreme. It was painful to note how often traditional theology and traditional counseling theory seemed to keep victims of violence in the role of victim, and at the same time to excuse or minimize those abusing power.

This was when I first saw the urgent need to reconsider how theologians and psychologists have dealt with issues of power, authority and obedience. However, as I began exploring these issues, it soon became apparent that the issue of how we are related to one another (particularly the balance between individuality and relationships to others) was a critical factor in understanding abuses of power, authority and obedience.

As the students sought to understand the causes of domestic violence, many of us noticed disturbing parallels between the dysfunctional relationships we read about and certain aspects of the counselor/client relationship. The unequal power and lack of personal boundaries found in dysfunctional relationships are often reflected in counselor/client relationships. Some counselors deny the

existence of power issues in their relationships with clients in the same way that others deny the existence of sexism and racism. Avoiding and denying the issue does not solve the problem, however.

This project, then, has two major foci. First, it focuses on what constitutes a healthy relatedness between counselor and client. An attempt is made to describe how power issues and personal boundaries operate in a functional (healthy) relatedness. Second, the project focuses on how issues of power, authority and obedience can distort or damage a healthy relationship between counselor and client.

Chapter 1 covers this project's two major foci, healthy relatedness and distorted relatedness, as developed in the thought of four psychological theorists. Foundational to the thesis of both this chapter and the entire project is Erich Fromm's argument that love is the basis for a healthy relatedness which overcomes interpersonal boundaries (separateness) without destroying individuality. Following Fromm's exploration of healthy relatedness, we examine his notion of how relatedness is distorted through authority, obedience and power. Chapter 1 is rounded out with the presentation of Alice Miller's insights on the distortions of healthy relatedness through "poisonous pedagogy," Karen Horney's description of how the three compulsive personality types distort relatedness, and Alfred Adler's explanation of superiority strivings.

Chapter 2 looks at our two foci through a theological

lens. We will follow the thought of both Paul Tillich and Bernard Loomer as they try to overcome the traditional dichotomies placed between love and power and love and authority. This exploration exposes both things that make for healthy relatedness and things that distort it.

Drawing from both psychologists and theologians, Chapter 3 explores issues of grace, human nature and relatedness. Assumptions about human nature and the place of grace in human life have a significant effect on our concepts of healthy and distorted relatedness. The importance of emphasizing and celebrating human relatedness, as well as human individuality, is also presented.

Chapter 4 attempts to apply some of the insights from the first three chapters to the counseling relationship itself. Chapter 4 attempts to describe what constitutes healthy relatedness between a counselor and a client. It also suggests approaches for avoiding distorted relatedness in the counselor/client relationship. Issues of power, authority, risk and client uniqueness are discussed, as well as the usefulness of empathy and role-modeling.

Chapter 5 touches on the special pitfalls and possibilities that pastoral counselors may encounter related to our two foci. It also provides some scriptural/theological resources for dealing with issues of power, authority and obedience. Chapter 6 provides a summary of some of the major points presented in this project and suggests a few directions for further action.

It is important to note that this project does not try to analyze power, authority and obedience in the larger social or political context. It remains focused on the interpersonal relationship, particularly that of counselor and client. This is not to suggest that such a social perspective is irrelevant to the counseling situation. It is most relevant. The constraints of space and focus, however, have only allowed me to touch on the larger social context in the most tangential way. Two very helpful beginning places for exploring issues of power and authority from the perspective of church governance or of the wider society are Paul M. Harrison's Authority and Power in the Free Church Tradition and Max Weber's Politics as a Vocation.

CHAPTER 1

Relatedness, Power, Authority and Obedience in Psychological Theories

Introduction

Before leaping into the themes of power, authority and obedience from a psychological perspective, this chapter presents different types of relatedness as described by Erich Fromm. His contrast between healthy and unhealthy ways of being related will be conveyed. After looking at Fromm's ideal of healthy relatedness, we will explore how he believes issues of authority and power can distort healthy relatedness. In summary, Fromm suggests that while love is the only healthy way to overcome separateness through relatedness, relatedness can be distorted by unhealthy forms of power, authority and obedience.

We will then move to three other psychologists who have examined healthy relatedness and its distortions through power, authority and obedience. We will touch on Alice Miller's description of "poisonous pedagogy" which teaches irrational obedience to authority and leads to a false self which cannot relate honestly to others. Karen Horney's description of how unsafe childhood environments lead to the creation of a false ideal self echoes Miller's concepts,

while Horney's three neurotic character trends are defined by a person's habitual form of relatedness to others. Horney's concept of the search for glory further explicates how relatedness can be damaged. Finally, we present Alfred Adler's notion of the striving for superiority and how such strivings can either contribute to or damage healthy relatedness.

Erich Fromm

This chapter will take some time to explain Fromm's foundational ideas on the human situation because I believe Fromm's theories are congruent with a Christian world view. Love being the proper means to overcome human separateness seems very congruent with Christian understandings of love. Mystical concepts of union with God and Paul's metaphor of all Christians being valued parts of one body parallel Fromm's notion of achieving union without sacrificing individuality. These views also have some mental health implications which we will explore later.

Fromm posits that the main problem of human existence _____, is the need to overcome separateness. In early life infants have no sense of separation between themselves and their environment. As they grow older they become increasingly aware of how separate they are from their environment. This awareness creates anxiety and a desire to reestablish relatedness or oneness. Not having the well-developed instinctual apparatus of most other animals to tell them how to act in the world, each human must choose a way of rela-

ting to the world. These choices, however, are limited and restricted by the level of satisfaction of instinctual needs, by the temperament of the child, and, perhaps most significantly, by the dominant modes of living in the society in which the child is raised.¹

Those choices made about how to relate (achieve reunion) with others and nature produce one's character. Character becomes a pseudo-instinct which greatly determines how one responds to new events in one's environment. When individuals achieve a certain degree of freedom a sense of isolation often sets in. This isolation is unbearable and must be overcome in some way.²

Overcoming this isolation, however, can be done in more or less healthy ways. The healthy way of overcoming separateness is a way which maintains individuality while achieving union. Love is the way in which humans can overcome their separateness from one another without forfeiting their identity. Unhealthy ways of overcoming separateness involve achieving union at the cost of one's individual identity. Masochists give up themselves to be subsumed by someone more powerful. Sadists overcome separateness by swallowing up another's personality. Conformity is a common way of overcoming separateness by letting one's individual identity disappear. By seeking to emulate and imitate societal expectations, individuals lose their real self and overlay it with a false self.³ Brainwashing and other coercive control methods involve the use of violence and

environmental control to change or reshape another's identity without their consent.⁴

These foundational theses of Fromm have particular relevance when we look at the dynamics of dysfunctional families and personalities. Children who grow up in families with an alcoholic parent often grow up with a over-developed sense of responsibility for the behavior of their dysfunctional parent. Children often come to feel that they are responsible for why their family isn't functioning well.

From the opposite perspective, parents often err in child rearing when they fail to try to see things from the child's perspective. Some parents (and at times all parents) see children only as an extension of themselves. These parents project their negative feelings about themselves onto their children and then punish them. Or, because they are unable to separate themselves from an infant child, they become upset when the child cries. These parents seem upset because the child is not fulfilling its function of loving and soothing the parent, but instead is making demands on the parent's time and energy. Instead of trying to discern the reason for the crying, such a parent will frantically try to keep the child from crying by screaming at it or other irrational behavior.

While Fromm's ideas about love are theologically congruent with Christian understandings of love, they also have implications for helping us recognize psychologically healthy love. We can see that sadism, masochism, and con-

formity are not really love. We can see that situations of coercive control are not love, whether the blatant brain-washing of prisoners during wartime or the more hidden controlling of wives and children through intimidation and threats. We can see that dysfunctional relationships in which individuals believe that their actions can control another's behavior (the child with an alcoholic parent) or that another person is merely an extension of oneself (a parent's relationship with a child) are unhealthy because individuality is sacrificed and the boundaries between separate personalities are confused. These methods are unhealthy because they overcome separateness by destroying individuality.

Beyond the question of health there are theological reasons why overcoming separateness and destroying individuality are evil and contrary to God's will. These ideas are centered around the idea that God values individuality. We are described as having been made in God's image. Psalm 8 portrays the glory of humanity, while Psalm 139 describes God's intimate knowing of us. Proverbs 14:3 suggests that to oppress humans is to insult their maker. When boundaries between individuals are blurred the divine spark of individuality is lost. Additionally, if community emerges from the communing of individuals, then when individuality is lost so is the richness of community life. This is certainly consonant with the point Paul is trying to make with his use of the parts of the body metaphor.⁵

Love, which Fromm argues is the healthy method of overcoming separateness, recognizes and values the uniqueness of individuals while overcoming the separateness between them. As we shall see in later chapters, this model of overcoming separateness while maintaining individuality and differences relates also to the human relations with God and within the counseling situation.

This background on Fromm provides the context needed for exploring his ideas about how certain types of authority, obedience and power can distort healthy relatedness. Fromm's thought is particularly helpful for our present enterprise in his writing about the differences between rational and irrational authority. Fromm discusses these ideas both in the abstract and in relation to ethics and religion.⁶

Fromm links rational authority with what he calls humanistic religion and humanistic ethics, while irrational authority is linked with authoritarian religion and authoritarian ethics. Fromm makes clear that both humanistic and authoritarian tendencies are mixed into most all major religions. These splits cannot be observed as following denominational lines. Though Fromm's non-theistic bent may be objectionable to many Christians I believe he still provides valuable critical tools for looking at Christianity and ethics.⁷

Fromm argues that the source for rational authority is competence.

Rational authority not only permits but requires constant scrutiny and criticism of those subjected to it; it is always temporary, its acceptance depending on its performance. . . . Rational authority is based upon the equality of both authority and subject, which differ only with respect to the degree of knowledge or skill in a particular field. Irrational authority is by its very nature based upon inequality, implying difference in value. . . . [The] source of irrational authority . . . is always power over people. . . . Power on the one side, fear on the other . . . criticism . . . [is] forbidden.⁸

Fromm recognizes that the difference between rational and irrational or inhibiting authority is not a completely dualistic one. There can be many gradations.⁹ Those gradations will have to do with the social environment and how the personalities involved view their own roles. The irrational authority's demands always advance the interests of the authority, not the interests of the subject, though it will always be claimed that what the authority does is for the benefit of the subject. ("This is for your own good," etc.)

Fromm clearly posits rational authority as better than irrational authority. While this may be a popular perspective for most human relationships, it is difficult to carry out in a theistic religious perspective. God could hardly be considered equal, nor do most Christians assume they will achieve a status of equality with God in the future. Suggesting that humans grant God authority based on our judgment of God's competence and past performance sounds sacrilegious and fraught with error. God's special knowledge and competence presumably lies in every area, not just one.

Nevertheless, perhaps the way out of this dilemma is to recognize the human-centered nature of organized religion. Organized religion, by the very requirements of its nature puts certain humans in the position of being interpreters or arbiters for God amongst other people. Therefore, perhaps the issues to be critically scrutinized are the interpretations of God's actions provided by other humans. Those who are authoritarian centered, of course, will deny that interpretation is going on and will insist that scripture (or whatever authoritative source) presents clear and unambiguous rules and interpretations of God's action.

Fromm provides some helpful consideration of the dangers of authoritarian religion in which humans project all their good onto God and react to God primarily in the mode of unquestioned obedience. Fromm suggests that the essential element in authoritarian religion is surrender to a transcendent power and that the main virtue therefore is obedience and the cardinal sin is disobedience. Humanistic religion, on the other hand, is centered around humans and their strengths, and the experience of oneness with the All.¹⁰ The humanistic religious conscience is not

the internalized voice of authority but man's own voice, the guardian of our integrity which recalls us to ourselves when we are in danger of losing ourselves. Sin is not primarily sin against God but sin against ourselves.¹¹

Fromm affirms the importance of realistic recognition of human limits, but feels that authoritarian religious personalities indulge themselves in the experience of sub-

mission and powerlessness. As he writes,

It is one thing to recognize one's dependence and limitations, and it is something entirely different to indulge in this dependence. . . . To understand realistically and soberly how limited our power is is an essential part of wisdom and of maturity; to worship it is masochistic and self-destructive. The one is humility, the other self-humiliation.¹²

A final concept of Fromm's that will be useful to us is his concept of power. Power, Fromm argues, is a single word that is used to describe two contrasting ideas, domination and potency. These two qualities rather than being identical are mutually exclusive.¹³ Potency has to do with one's ability to do and to act in the world while drawing on the richness within oneself. Domination has to do with controlling others rather than producing with one's own power. This dichotomy has been presented in many ways by various authors; power to do versus power over; power with versus power over; power in participation versus power over. The relationship between these two kinds of power (potency and domination) is, in fact, Fromm argues, inversely proportional. The less potency one has the more one needs to dominate others.

The lust for power [over others] is not rooted in strength but in weakness. It is the expression of the inability of the individual self to stand alone and live."¹⁴

In our relationships to others we all need to experience that we have an effect on others, that our existence makes a difference. If we do not have the potency to effect love towards another, then we may resort to trying to effect

fear and suffering in another.¹⁵ The effect our love has on others may not be as easily or quickly discernable as the effect we can get by creating fear or suffering in another. Or, as Fromm writes,

The experience of absolute control over another being . . . creates the illusion of transcending the limitations of human existence. . . . It is the transformation of impotence into the experience of omnipotence.¹⁶

Alice Miller

Readers familiar with the work of Alice Miller may have already noticed parallels between her thought and Fromm's, particularly his description of the ways in which irrational authority, authoritarian religion and dominating power distort healthy relatedness. Though by no means in full agreement, the work of both authors does agree on several points. They come to their analysis of authority and obedience from rather different angles, however.

Fromm, trained as a psychoanalyst, moved away from Freud's theories by emphasizing the great importance which social context plays in shaping the character of individuals. In Miller's movement away from her psychoanalytic training, she criticized the drive theories and other aspects of traditional Freudian beliefs. Yet Miller remains focused on the intrapsychic and early childhood experiences in the family. Nevertheless, from this more intrapsychic perspective Miller, by use of case studies, makes some convincing extrapolations about cultural and societal repercussions of early childhood experiences.

Miller asserts that people who abuse power develop from the "poisonous pedagogy" which predominates in Western culture. Miller argues that this poisonous pedagogy is "used to condition a child at an early age not to become aware of what is really being done to him or her."¹⁷ Poisonous pedagogy employs various techniques to manipulate children to behave as their parents wish and to teach children to repress and "control" their feelings. Poisonous pedagogy requires a child learn to obey even the most difficult and "unnatural" commands without questions or complaints. This is the distortion of relatedness that Fromm calls irrational authority.

Miller gives many examples of how adults project their own control issues onto even infants and how adults anthropomorphize their own adult issues onto their young children.¹⁸ Children are taught that their authoritarian parents (as well as teachers and other adults) are always right and therefore,

There is no need for . . . children to rack their brains in each case to determine whether what is demanded of them is right or not. And how is this to be judged? Where are the standards supposed to come from if someone has always been told what was right and what was wrong and if he never had an opportunity to become familiar with his own feelings.¹⁹

Miller argues that "The results of this struggle against strong emotions are so disastrous because the suppression begins in infancy, i.e., before the child's self has had a chance to develop."²⁰ Thus, children develop a

false self to satisfy the needs/commands of the parent and have great obstacles placed in the way of discovering their true self. Here, Miller parallels another of Fromm's concerns. She warns against parents swallowing up a child before the child has a chance to develop its individuality. The child is needy and vulnerable and will, in order to survive, sacrifice its "self" to assure the love of its caregiver.

In demonstrating the intent of poisonous pedagogy and its ability to be generalized to non-parenting situations Miller quotes from an essay on the education and instruction of children.

A child who is used to obeying his parent will also willingly submit to the laws and rules of reason once he is on his own and his own master, since he is already accustomed not to act in accordance with his own will.²¹

This quote is a significant one. Its underlying assumption that not to follow one's own will is desirable is an idea that will be explored further in Chapter 3's discussion of grace, human nature and relatedness.

Though Erich Fromm does not use the true/false self language of Miller in the same way, many of his ideas parallel her idea that a false self is set up to please others which results in self-alienation. Relatedness which requires self-alienation is distorted, and continued repression is the beginning of self-alienation. As Fromm observes,

It seems important to stress the fact that every repression eliminates parts of one's real self and

enforces the substitution of a pseudo feeling for the one which has been repressed.²²

Karen Horney

Karen Horney is an important psychologist to include in this chapter for two reasons. First, there is the value of her ideas to our topic. Much of Horney's work focused on the different styles of relatedness people develop. Second, she and Paul Tillich were friends and it seems likely they may have influenced one another's thought.

Some of Horney's ideas are strikingly similar to Alice Miller's. Miller's belief that children develop a false self to assure their parents' caretaking is not too different from Horney's notion that people's neurotic trends are established to ensure them security in their relationships with others. Both concepts share similarities with Fromm's descriptions of distorted relatedness.

Horney believes that people's drive to be safe or accepted is primary. A child who is raised in an insufficiently safe family environment will develop an idealized self who is never anxious or afraid.²³ This idealized self is much like Miller's false self. In both cases the false self is an image or persona developed for the benefit others or to help one get along with others by pleasing or impressing them.

If children feel their world is unsafe or their parents are untrustworthy, they develop a basic anxiety. This basic anxiety is due to a basic conflict which develops within the

child

between his or her actual dependence on the parents and the need to rebel against insensitive parenting, thereby preserving the real self. Anger and aggression must be repressed because of the situation of dependence. . . . Compliance is necessary, yet it produces a defenselessness that in turn fosters a process by which the child loses touch with self-love within, identifying instead with the idealized self constructed in response to family requirements.²⁴

As the child grows older three different patterns for overcoming basic anxiety develop. Though a healthy person would choose freely from whichever pattern of relatedness seemed appropriate to a particular situation, a neurotic individual tends to be stuck in only one pattern of response which they use for all situations. These three patterns of relatedness are Moving Toward People or Compulsive Compliance, Moving Against Others or Compulsive Aggression, and Moving Away from People or Compulsive Detachment.²⁵ Whenever one of these three patterns dominate an individual's relatedness style, that individual's relatedness becomes distorted by issues of power, authority and obedience.

Horney's Moving Toward or Compulsive Compliance person has a constant need for love and approval. This type, in order to be loved, submerges his or her own needs; in fact, for this type "assertiveness, criticism of others and getting one's own way must be repressed in favor of idealized loveliness."²⁶ The Moving Toward person equates love with sacrifice. This is much like Fromm's definition of masochistic love in which one achieves union (relatedness) with others by paying the price of giving up one's individuality.

The Moving Against or Compulsive Aggression personality is likewise similar to Fromm's sadistic personality who overcomes separateness by consuming or destroying the individuality of another. The "compulsive needs" of the moving against type are "to dominate and control others, to exploit and outsmart them, and to prevail on them."²⁷

The Moving Away personality seeks a protected isolation which makes them feel special and unique. Their goals are "not to need anybody, not to be involved, not to be influenced by others."²⁸ Each of these neurotic patterns suggests an inability to relate appropriately to others. Such inflexible tendencies are insensitive both to context and to particular personalities. The give and take of true healthy relationships is not possible.

The first personality type is always "giving" and never receiving. The second type is always taking and never giving. The third type is isolated -- afraid to get involved in the give and take of relationships because of the commitment it might imply. The moving away people isolate themselves, the moving against people alienate others, and the moving toward people are alienated from themselves. None are able to relate freely from their true self as their defensive stance keeps them from being able to relate honestly to others. In all cases distorted relatedness results from misuse of power. One personality type gives away its power, another dominates others, and the third seeks to be completely independent of and uninfluenced by

the power of others.

This brings us to a final contribution of Horney's thought, her concept of the Search of Glory and its relation to the idealized self. The Search for Glory is the search "to justify and substantiate the idealized self."²⁹ The neurotic trend (or compulsive personality) one uses to cope with anxiety is idealized.³⁰ Such "self-glorification promises feelings of superiority and significance to compensate for the actual feelings of fear and lack of acceptance."³¹

Horney has a positive view of human nature. She believes people have an "inherent urge to grow" and that "the live forces of the real self urge one toward self-realization."³² When the environment of the child is so lacking in safety that it produces insecurity, drives toward self-idealization result. Such self-idealization has far reaching unhealthy effects because "the energies driving toward self-realization are shifted to the aim of actualizing the idealized self."³³

These ideas are critically important particularly as they link with the theological ideas of grace and the place of grace in the healing process. These links will be discussed more in Chapters 3 and 4.

Alfred Adler

A final psychologist we shall consider is Alfred Adler who has written about the will-to-power and the strivings for superiority. Adler's emphasis on the will-to-power and

strivings for superiority have often been taken out of context and misinterpreted. Along with those strivings Adler has posited a social interest or community feeling. This community feeling refers to a sense of "human solidarity," of "connectedness," of "fellowship." It refers to "the interest we take in others not simply to serve our own purposes, but 'an interest in the interests' of others."³⁴

Just as Fromm tried to define a positive and negative expression of power, Adler posits that the striving for superiority can go in either a healthy, constructive direction or a negative direction.³⁵ When superiority goals are healthy they include "social concerns and . . . the welfare of others" and appear in "the form of striving to grow, to develop one's skills and abilities."³⁶ As in Fromm's model, healthy development of individuality coincides with healthy relatedness.

The negative form such superiority striving can take is what Adler calls a search for personal superiority. In this case such people "try to achieve a sense of superiority by dominating others rather than by becoming more useful to others."³⁷ This, of course, is very similar to Fromm's notion of two mutually exclusive kinds of power: potency and domination. Adler saw the striving for personal superiority as arising when "inferiority feelings predominate or when social interest is underdeveloped" because such people "lack confidence in their ability to function effectively and to work constructively with others."³⁸ Here,

Adler confirms Fromm's thesis that those who seek the power of dominating others do so from a lack of the power of potency.

Adler described the striving for superiority as arising normally from childhood experiences of weakness and inferiority in an adult world.³⁹ The striving for superiority (or will-to-power) is an attempt to feel capable and integrated. This healthy striving becomes exaggerated in neurotics.⁴⁰ Only then, when it becomes striving for personal superiority, does it distort relatedness.

Concluding Comments

Regarding our first focus, Erich Fromm has provided us with a basic description of healthy relatedness. Healthy relatedness overcomes separateness while still maintaining the integrity of individuals. Fromm suggest that love is the way to maintain healthy relatedness.

In regard to our second focus, Fromm, Miller, Horney and Adler's overlapping concepts provide us with a picture of the many ways healthy relatedness is distorted through issues of power, authority and obedience. It is important to notice, however, the various dual or two-part definitions presented. Fromm contrasted domination and potency as two types of power. He also contrasted rational and irrational authority and humanistic and authoritarian religion. Adler contrasted normal strivings for superiority with strivings for personal superiority.

In some of these definitions the two terms have been

described as mutually exclusive, while in others they have been described as being gradations on a continuum. In Chapter 2 we will see that the theologians Paul Tillich and Bernard Loomer present some very similar types of dual definitions. As we proceed, it will be important to note when power, authority and obedience distort relatedness and, on the other hand, to recognize healthy expressions of power, authority and obedience.

Miller, Horney and Adler are all struggling with the central issue Fromm presents. How can persons overcome separateness and achieve union without sacrificing their individuality? Or, how can people relate to others in a way that preserves their identity yet expresses their relatedness or social interest? How can they maintain boundaries and avoid distorting their relatedness through power issues?

Horney suggests that unhealthy people respond to others with one typical response pattern rather than being able to freely choose between different types of responses. Adler posits that a lack of social interest results when feelings of inferiority dominate. Thus, when one's sense of identity or potency is threatened, one's energies are focused on impressing or controlling others rather than contributing to others. In this way healthy relatedness is distorted.

Individuals in dysfunctional families are often described as having enmeshed personalities, for example. Such individuals are overly dependent and inadequately individuated from each other. Yet, people do need to feel

related and connected to others in some way. The Western world's emphasis on individuality and its devaluing of relationships, combined with its notions of original sin have created serious difficulties in developing healthy models of authority, obedience and the uses of power. Some of the implications of these problems will be examined in Chapter 3.

From the psychologists in this chapter we have learned that it is important to distinguish between different types of power and authority. Obedience, then, is appropriate only when it is matched to healthy authority or exercise of power.

While this may be theoretically clear, distinctions between healthy and unhealthy power and authority in real life can be quite blurred at times. It is not always easy to distinguish healthy and unhealthy power, healthy and unhealthy authority, or healthy and unhealthy obedience. This is in large part a reflection of the ambiguities within individual people.

When self-esteem is shaky, one may be too easily threatened by the healthy power or authority of another. Sometimes an authority's knowledge cannot be adequately conveyed or understood by another. And, of course, the capacity for self-deception can exist equally well within both those exercising power and authority and those rebelling against it. In fact, it is perhaps disconcerting to note that according to the psychologists presented here, it

is the very people who have damaged self-esteem who need to lord power and authority over others. Sociologically, this may imply that such damaged persons might gravitate towards those positions of influence which they can attain such as political office, clergy or counselors. If there is any truth to this sociological hypothesis, then we must be alert to the cycle of damage this would create and to the difficulty of stopping such a cycle of damage.

Counselors who have not reflected carefully on issues of power and individual boundaries in their relationships to clients may unwittingly replicate the kinds of distorted relatedness which initially brought clients into counseling. The four theorists we have studied in this chapter are useful to counselors in two major ways.

First, they provide a conceptual framework for understanding some of what has gone wrong in clients' relatedness to others. By showing clients how power and other issues have distorted their relatedness to others, we can help them regain healthy relatedness.

Second, and more relevant to the thesis of this paper, these psychologists provide us with a framework for reflecting critically on our own relatedness to our clients.

Issues of power, authority and obedience are central to counseling, though they are often disguised and denied by both client and therapist. These reflections on healthy relatedness and distorted relatedness due to power, authority and obedience provide counselors with a direction to

head towards and signs of warning and caution.

The ideas of many traditional, and more popular, psychologists continue to distort counselor/client relatedness by their denial or mishandling of power and boundary issues. The four psychologists presented here provide some corrective psychological theory. Chapter 2 presents some corrective theology.

NOTES

Chapter 1

¹ Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom (New York: Rinehart, 1941), 24-36. See also Fromm, The Sane Society (New York: Rinehart, 1955), 30-33; and Fromm, Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1947), 48-51.

² Erich Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1973), 26, 106-107. See also Fromm, Escape From Freedom, 21-22; and Man for Himself, 62-69.

³ Fromm, Escape From Freedom, 140-206, 260-261. See also Fromm, The Sane Society, 31-33.

⁴ Ginny Nicarthy, Getting Free: A Handbook for Women in Abusive Relationships 2nd ed., expanded (Seattle: Seal Press, 1986), 287. See also Lewis Okun, Woman Abuse: Facts Replacing Myths (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 86-89, 113-136.

⁵ A personal note from Joan Overturf, D.S.W., Claremont, Ca., received in January 1989 raised the question and supplied some of answers described in this paragraph.

⁶ Erich Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950). See also Fromm, Escape From Freedom and Man for Himself.

⁷ Erich Fromm, D.T. Suzuki and Richard De Martino, Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis (New York: Harper, 1960), 94-95. In general Fromm has found the non-theistic bent of Zen Buddhism a healthier (or safer) religious perspective than that of Western monotheistic religions. From Fromm's perspective the popular practice of monotheism often personifies or anthropomorphizes God and thus leads to unnecessary confusion.

⁸ Fromm, Man for Himself, 19.

⁹ Fromm, Escape from Freedom, 166.

¹⁰ Fromm, Psychoanalysis and Religion, 35-37.

- 11 Ibid., 88.
- 12 Ibid., 53. ,
- 13 Fromm, Escape from Freedom, 162.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Fromm, The Anatomy of Destructiveness, 266.
- 16 Ibid., 323.
- 17 Alice Miller, For Your Own Good (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983), 9.
- 18 Ibid., 30.
- 19 Ibid., 83-84.
- 20 Ibid., 27.
- 21 Ibid., 14.
- 22 Fromm, Escape from Freedom, 202.
- 23 Robert Frager and James Fadiman, Personality and Personal Growth, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 122-123.
- 24 Ibid., 130-131.
- 25 Ibid., 124. See also Howard Clinebell, Contemporary Growth Therapies (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 75; and Karen Horney, Neurosis and Human Growth (New York: Norton, 1950), 19.
- 26 Frager and Fadiman, 124.
- 27 Ibid., 124-125.
- 28 Ibid., 126.
- 29 Ibid., 132.
- 30 Horney, 22.
- 31 Frager and Fadiman, 132.
- 32 Horney, 38.
- 33 Ibid., 24.
- 34 Frager and Fadiman, 102.

³⁵ Ibid., 99.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 105.

³⁹ Heinz L. Ansbacher and Rowena R. Ansbacher, eds.,
The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler (New York: Basic,
1956), 114.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 108-109.

CHAPTER 2

Relatedness, Power, Authority and Obedience in Christian Theology

Introduction

In the last chapter we began by exploring how separateness can be overcome in a healthy way through the power (or potency) of love. We then looked at the many ways power, authority and obedience can distort healthy relatedness.

In the Christian West power and love have often been set against each other as opposites. Power was supposed to be used by the worldly or carnal, while love was to be used by the spiritual and Christian. This dominant theme has often made it difficult to reconcile spirituality with earthly existence, particularly when looking at the place of power in dealing with injustice.

Both Paul Tillich and Bernard Loomer reject setting up a dichotomy between love and power. Both have tried to establish how love and power are interrelated. To accomplish this task they redefine power and authority by contrasting a good or healthy power and authority with a bad or unhealthy power and authority. Certain ideas about the nature of human relatedness are implicit in the way these authors relate love and power. Some of these implications will be lifted up for our consideration as we explore the

ideas of these two theologians.

Paul Tillich

Paul Tillich wrote a book called Love, Power, and Justice to try and show how integrally related these three concepts were. Tillich observed that love and power were typically contrasted with each other in Christian theology. Love is perceived merely as an emotional state and power is perceived merely as a compulsory act. Tillich argues that it is "powerless love" and "loveless power" that are contrasted. He disagrees with traditional definitions that identify love "with a resignation of power and power with a denial of love."¹ If love were basically understood as an emotion it would merely be "a sentimental addition to power and justice, ultimately irrelevant, unable to change either the laws of justice or the structures of power."²

Tillich refers to power as "the self-affirmation of life . . . overcoming internal and external resistance."³ Like Fromm, Tillich wants to contrast power as self-affirmation (potency was Fromm's word) with power over others (domination).

Tillich wants to make a similar distinction in the use of the word force. "The term 'force' points both to the strength a thing has in itself and to the way in which it has effects on other things."⁴

The role of compulsion in power is related to Tillich's view of what takes place in every encounter. He sees all encounters as involving a struggle of power with power.

Tillich argues that compulsion is a necessary element of power, but that power's use of compulsion "is only effective if it is an expression of the actual power relation." Once compulsion crosses this limit it becomes self-defeating and undermines the power which it is trying to preserve.⁵

Tillich describes each being in such a power struggle as having both given power (powers by definition of their being) and unspecified powers (different levels of ability within a common definition). It is in the area of these unspecified powers that decisions are always made during encounters, and it is in these areas where the possibility of injustice occurs.⁶ Tillich goes on,

If the new decisions destroy the essential claim of a being, they are unjust. It is not unjust that in the struggle between power and power one of the beings involved shows a superior power of being. . . . But injustice occurs if in this struggle the superior power uses its power for the reduction or destruction of the inferior power. This can happen in all forms of personal encounters. Most frequent are those forms in which the personal encounter occurs within the frame of an institutional structure and the preservation and growth of the institution gives the pretext for unjust compulsion.⁷

Tillich continues this argument a bit less abstractly later in his book when he writes that "it is not compulsion which is unjust, but a compulsion which destroys the object of compulsion instead of working toward its fulfilment." The importance of recognizing and maintaining right relationship seems to be a key criterion for Tillich in the expression of power. On the same page as the quote above he writes

It is not compulsion which violates justice, but a compulsion which disregards the intrinsic claim of a being to be acknowledged as what it is within the context of all beings.⁸

Tillich's notion of achieving right relationship within a context of struggle strikes a balance similar to the balance Fromm struck between overcoming separateness and maintaining individuality.

Applying Tillich's view of the struggle that takes place in every encounter to the counseling situation, we can see the importance of counselors using their power carefully so that they do not violate justice or use their power in a way that diminishes their clients. Rather, they should seek to aid their clients in a search for fulfilment.

Tillich, like Fromm, tries to contrast two types of authority. He acknowledges that there is often an unjust psychological compulsion in family relations, in educational relations and in all other authority relations. He argues that beyond external compulsion, the use of psychological compulsion "conflicts with the justice of person-to-person encounters."⁹ Psychological compulsion is, of course, a type of abuse which a trained counselor could perform well.

Tillich goes on to assert that certain types of authority are unjust by nature while others are not. He describes "authority in principle" as being unjust by nature. For examples of those who rely on authority by principle, he cites the Pope, the Bible, dictators, parents, and teachers. "Authority in principle means that a person

has authority by the place he occupies and that he is beyond criticism because of this place." This type of authority is unjust by nature because, "It disregards the intrinsic claim of human beings to become responsible for ultimate decisions."¹⁰ This description matches Fromm's concept of irrational authority.

A contrasting type of authority is "authority in fact" which Tillich argues is "exercised as well as accepted by each of us in every moment." He describes "authority in fact" as

an expression of the mutual dependence of all of us on each other; it is an expression of the finite and fragmentary character of our being, of the limits of our power to stand by ourselves. For this reason it is a just authority.¹¹

It seems worthwhile to nuance Tillich's point here. Sometimes A's role or place may involve responsibilities to a group or to another individual which B does not share. Examples of such relationships could include parent-child, employer-employee, counselor-client and others. In each case above one person either has commitments or responsibilities that go beyond their interpersonal relationship. This kind of situation can blur the distinctions between "in principle" and "in fact" types of authority.

On the other hand, the recognition of responsibilities and commitments beyond the interpersonal suggests Tillich's "authority in fact" because such commitment expresses mutual dependence. More important to observe, perhaps, is the point that even in cases of responsibilities or commitments

beyond the interpersonal, it is an injustice to take away another's responsibility for their own decisions. Thus, establishing sanctions or setting limits for anti-social behavior could be examples of just responses, if the sanctions are established and known.

In exploring the religious basis for ethical norms, Tillich contrasts heteronomous theological foundations of moral imperatives with theonomous foundations. Heteronomous foundations refer to the habit of perceiving moral commands as "expressions of a divine will, which is sovereign and without criteria." Therefore, such commands "must be obeyed" without question.¹² Tillich suggests that such commands are difficult to distinguish from the commands of a human tyrant. In both cases commands are to be obeyed because there is a threat of destruction for those who disobey. But, Tillich questions, "Is not that destruction more to be feared which would follow the submission of one's personality centre to a strange will?"¹³

Submitting one's personality center to a strange will is, of course, the same concern expressed by the psychologists in Chapter 1. Fromm discussed the dangers of overcoming separateness by giving up one's individuality. Miller's warning that poisonous pedagogy creates a false self was similar to Horney's belief that an unsafe environment creates an idealized self.

Tillich believes that a theonomous foundation of moral imperatives is more in agreement with classical theology.

In this situation God's law is a natural law. The law is woven into the very fabric of existence and (for humans) describes human nature. This type of law "stands against" one only when one's essential nature has been distorted. Psychologists might describe one's essential nature as being distorted when one has developed a false self. Only once one's essential nature has been distorted, Tillich argues, would denial of God's laws become self-destructive.¹⁴

I believe this is the same point Fromm is trying to make when he suggests that sinning is more a matter of sinning against oneself than sinning against God. It also echoes in part the distinction Fromm makes between authoritarian religion which focuses on obedience and submission and humanitarian religion which focuses on human strengths and the experience of oneness with the All. All of this does raise additional questions about the relationship of human sin and human goodness. We will look into those issues further in Chapter 3.

Continuing to explore the relationship between God's love and God's power, Tillich contrasts symbols which express our relation to God as holy power and those which express our relation to God as holy love. He criticizes theologians who only use the symbol "Lord" and exclude symbols in which the uniting love of God is expressed. As he notes,

The God who is only the Lord easily becomes a despotic ruler . . . and demands heteronomous obedience and unquestioned acceptance of his sayings. Obedience to God prevails over against

love of God. Man is broken by judgments and threats before he is accepted. Thus his rational autonomy as well as his will are broken. The Lord who is only Lord destroys the created nature of his subjects in order to save them. This is the authoritarian distortion of the symbol of God as Lord.¹⁵

Bernard Loomer

Bernard Loomer, a process theologian, has written a thought provoking essay which describes two different conceptions of power.¹⁶ These two conceptions have some similarity to the dual definitions of power we have already encountered. Loomer begins by presenting a rather traditional definition of power which he labels unilateral or linear power. This conception of power, he argues, which has dominated our lives and thought sees power as "the ability to produce an effect, or as the capacity to bring into being, to actualize or maintain what has been actualized."¹⁷ He labels this power as unilateral or linear because it is seen as the "strength to exert a shaping and determining influence on the other."¹⁸ This type of power is non-relational and, in fact, reduces other people to being a function of one's own ends "even when one's aims include what is thought to be the good of the other...."¹⁹

From such a definition of power it follows "that the gain in power by the other is experienced as a loss of one's own power and therefore of one's status and sense of worth."²⁰ This conception of power is very individualistic as

the aim is to move toward the maximum of self-sufficiency. The self is to become as self-

dependent as possible. Dependency on others, as well as passivity, are symptoms of weakness or insufficiency.²¹

The exercise of this kind of power also tends to produce alienation for the possessor of power. This type of power, attenuates the sense of fellow-feeling. It weakens the communal ties that bind us to each other. It deadens our sensitivity to the fact that we are deeply dependent on each other and that we are creative of each other.²²

This, of course, is very similar to Adler's idea that striving for personal superiority results from a lack of healthy social interest.

The thesis of Loomer's article is that a worldview which recognizes the importance and centrality of relationships in life requires a different conception of power, a conception of relational power rather than unilateral power. Such a relational conception defines power not only as the ability to produce but also the ability to undergo an effect.

It is the capacity both to influence others and to be influenced by others. Relational power involves both a giving and a receiving.... The capacity to absorb an influence is as truly a mark of power as the strength involved in exerting an influence.²³

Here Loomer is adding a new element to our dual definitions of power. This relational conception of power as including the ability to absorb an influence brings a new element into focus. This positive definition of power is not merely potency to do or the self-affirmation of life within oneself. This is an affirmation of the relationships which provide the context and foundation for our individual

life.

Many counselors operate under the mistaken assumption that their job is only to produce an effect on or influence their clients. At times the counselor's being influenced or effected by the client can be more therapeutic to the client than the counselor's more directive attempts at helping.

Loomer goes on to describe how the practice of relational power both requires and demonstrates greater value than the practice of unilateral power.²⁴ This is, in part, because receiving is not merely "unresponsive passivity." It is rather "an active openness."

Our openness to be influenced by another, without losing our identity or sense of self-dependence, is not only an acknowledgement and affirmation of the other as an end rather than a means to an end. It is also a measure of our own strength and size.²⁵

The above quote also has implications for the ways people choose to overcome separateness. If it takes strength to maintain one's identity while being influenced by another, then we can see that strength is needed to overcome separateness while maintaining individuality. The necessity of counselors having strength for their dealings with clients will be explored more in Chapter 4.

Loomer's article has many useful and thought provoking observations to make about the impact of conceiving power relationally. Most relevant to our current task are his comments which contrast the limitations of a unilateral conception of power with the advantages of a relational

conception of power.

First, Loomer, like Tillich, wants to integrally relate love and power rather than posit them as polar opposites. To this end, Loomer observes that a "creative and strong love" which consists of "mutual giving and receiving is not possible" under a definition of unilateral power, because such a definition describes receiving as weaknesss and power as influencing and controlling others.²⁶

Second, Loomer describes how much less individualistic a relational conception of power is. While unilateral power enthusiasts may be concerned that "being influenced" may demonstrate "a neurotic dependence on others," relational power enthusiasts observe that "the unqualified urge to influence or to dominate others may indicate a fundamental insecurity and lack of size [value or worth]."²⁷ In Chapter 3 we will explore further some of these dynamics of relatedness.

Third, Loomer describes the different conceptions of "the good" that exist in unilateral and relational conceptions of power. Unilateral power is used to influence the other toward a preconceived good. Unfortunately, this preconceived good is usually the preconceived "good" of the influencer. The one being influenced may have a different perception of the good being aimed at. In such a case, the influencer's concept of good is projected onto the one being influenced. In this way the influencer is expressing "the conscious or unconscious desire to transform the other in

one's own image."²⁸ This is always a danger that counselors face. Counselors can have a powerful influence on their clients, both for good and for ill. That is why we must critically evaluate how we use power. We must avoid abusing it.

With relational power, however, the good is not preconceived. "The true good is not a function of controlling or dominating influence. The true good is an emergent from deeply mutual relationships."²⁹

This echoes Tillich's point that in struggles between unequal powers justice requires that the one with superior power not use that power to reduce or destroy the inferior power. Recognizing the "intrinsic claim" of a being requires a deep mutuality from a relationship.

Thus refining his definition of relational power, Loomer argues that relational power is neither the capacity to produce or to undergo an effect. Rather relational power is "the capacity to sustain a . . . relationship of mutually influencing and being influenced, of mutually giving and receiving, of mutually making claims and permitting and enabling others to make their claims."³⁰ This could almost be a description of a therapeutic encounter, or at least the therapeutic encounter as we will try to describe it in Chapter 4.

By defining relational power with an emphasis on mutuality we require that descriptions of power become very concrete and contextual rather than abstract. In fact, uses

of power which ignore context and the ambiguities and particularities which arise in concrete situations are destructive, Loomer argues.³¹ The type of relationships which are the goal of relational power are relationships in which "the individuals (or groups) are neither swallowed up in the relationship nor are they absorbed into each other."³² Once again we arrive at a description of healthy relatedness.

Fourth, Loomer observes that suffering servant imagery is rendered meaningless or sentimental within the conception of unilateral power. A christological figure such as Jesus "who is to be found at the bottom of the hierarchy of unilateral power, stands at the apex of life conceived in terms of relational power."³³

Christ's (or the suffering servant's) capacity and willingness to sustain relationship while enduring misunderstanding and suffering arises not out of a masochistic giving up of self-affirmation and strength. It is rather a demonstration of the tremendous power of Christ to absorb the hate and confusion of others without breaking his relationship with or his concern for them.

Finally, recognizing along with Tillich the inescapability of different levels of power amongst individuals, Loomer argues for the superiority of a relational conception of power to that of unilateral power in dealing with these inequalities. Such inequalities are often viewed as an unfairness and unfairness raises questions of justice. How do those of unequal power relate to one another? What are

the responsibilities of each? Loomer argues that unilateral and relational power imply different responses to the unfairness of unequal power.

In the life of unilateral power the unfairness means that the stronger are able to control and dominate the weaker and thereby claim their disproportionate share of the world's goods and values. In the life of relational power, the unfairness means that those of larger size must undergo greater suffering and bear a greater burden in sustaining those relationships which hopefully may heal the brokenness of the seamless web of interdependence in which we all live. "Of whom much is given, much is expected."³⁴

Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined ways of overcoming the traditional dichotomy between love and power, and between love and authority. We have seen that a right relationship doesn't exclude uses of power, but rather excludes misuses of power. Power is misused or used unjustly when it is used to reduce or destroy the power of another. Power is used unjustly when it is exercised without mutuality.

We have seen that greater power implies special responsibility to sustain relationships and work towards fulfillment of those of lesser power. We have seen that being influenced without losing one's identity is as much a sign of power as influencing others. We have seen the importance of being concrete and contextual in weighing the justice/injustice of power's usage.

Both counselor/client and pastor/parishioner relationships exist within a particular context. Sensitivity to the possibilities of abuses of power and authority in the coun-

seling relationship with be explored in Chapter 4. In Chapter 3 we will look at some issues of grace, human nature, and relatedness as presented by both psychologists and theologians.

NOTES

Chapter 2

¹ Paul Tillich, Love, Power, and Justice (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), 11.

² Ibid., 24.

³ Ibid., 37.

⁴ Ibid., 46.

⁵ Ibid., 47-48.

⁶ Ibid., 87-88.

⁷ Ibid., 88.

⁸ Ibid., 67.

⁹ Ibid., 88-89.

¹⁰ Ibid., 89-90.

¹¹ Ibid., 90.

¹² Ibid., 76.

¹³ Ibid., 76.

¹⁴ Ibid., 76-77.

¹⁵ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 1:287.

¹⁶ Bernard Loomer, "Two Conceptions of Power," Process Studies 6, no. 1 (Spring 1976):5-32.

¹⁷ Loomer, 6.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 8.

20 Ibid., 10-11.

21 Ibid., 13.

22 Ibid., 14.

23 Ibid., 17.

24 Ibid., 18.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., 19.

27 Ibid., 18.

28 Ibid., 19.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., 22.

31 Ibid., 24-26.

32 Ibid., 26.

33 Ibid., 30.

34 Ibid., 31.

CHAPTER 3

Grace, Human Nature, and Relatedness

All psychologists and theologians work out their ideas with some basic assumptions about human nature. Beliefs about the sources of human evil and the natural state of human beings have a great effect on theories about human relatedness and on theories of counseling.

Issues of power, authority and obedience are also tied up with notions of human nature. If people are all naturally evil, then perhaps we need authorities with power to force us to behave well. If we are all naturally good, then perhaps it is the authorities who cause so much suffering. In either context, obedience is considered a virtue only when one is obedient to the "right" people. The Nuremberg Trials certainly demonstrated that.

In this chapter we will borrow from both theologians and psychologists to consider issues of grace, human nature, and relatedness. We will begin by examining the implicit assumptions some psychologists have about human nature. These assumptions will be set beside the concepts of grace and original sin. We will then explore these same issues with selected theologians.

Roberto Assagioli's ideas about human willpower will then be presented to see their relationship to issues of

grace and human nature. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of how notions of individuality and social relatedness can shift our analysis of grace and the capacity for human evil.

Before launching into our discussion of human nature, it is important to lift up some limitations in the concept of human nature. "Human nature" is a term which is often used to describe a fixed or unavoidable tendency or need of human beings. It primarily refers to an emotional, psychological, or spiritual tendency rather than a physical one. The assumptions that human nature is evil or that human nature is good both attempt to describe human fixedness. This notion of fixedness is in tension with this project's stress on the relational nature of human development and the importance of context.

Though drawing out and clarifying this tension would be a large and very worthwhile task, it did not seem to fit within the confines and constraints of this project. Some aspects of the tension between human fixedness and relational thinking will be explored at the end of this chapter and the beginning of Chapter 6.

One underlying premise of counseling is that people can be changed for the better. Diverse as their theoretical constructs may be, most therapists share an assumption that through counseling their clients can learn to function better in life. Typically, the cause of a client's problem is diagnosed and through healing past pain, learning new

skills, or both, people are restored to better functioning.

The psychologists presented in this paper so far share a belief in the inherent healthy tendency of people. They see those experiencing living difficulties or expressing destructive tendencies as having been damaged by life experiences and as needing to relearn.

Alice Miller's critique of poisonous pedagogy is partly a critique of the view of human nature implicit in those pedagogies. Poisonous pedagogy's main goal is to destroy the child's willfulness when the child is weak and susceptible to such an attack. The sinful, selfishness of the infants or children is to be destroyed so that the child can learn to behave according to God's will instead of the child's own selfish nature. (One wonders how such a notion of sinful children dealt with Jesus saying that people must come to God as a child.) Poisonous pedagogy is certainly well rooted in the notions of original or even "genetic" sin which have been taught in some of our Sunday schools and from some of our pulpits.

Miller, along with other object-relations psychologists and Horney and Adler, emphasizes the inherent good of the infant. What infants need to grow into healthy and unselfish adults is not strict training but good mirroring. Rather than trying to force their children to only feel certain ways or to suppress their feelings, parents should help them to express and articulate their feelings in order to find their true self. Such mirroring allows children to

develop a healthy self free from narcissistic obsessions.¹

These assumptions about the "natural" health of infants are, of course, theoretical and difficult to prove. Since infants are always raised by imperfect parents, our description of an ideal environment for a growing child is part extrapolation from differences we have been able to observe and part conjecture. Having no perfect models, it is difficult to ascertain whether "defects" in a child arise naturally or from an unhealthy environment. While I admire the spontaneous, trusting, honest nature of children, I also remember how cruel children can be at times.

Miller attributes cruelty (whether in children or adults) to early training which kept the child from exploring and expressing its true feelings. Unaware of its own true feelings, such damaged children are unable to experience empathy for others. Thus, they are cruel to others.

Setting limits and sanctions on a child's behavior is not the same as teaching that child to deny its feelings. In fact, sensitive parents will help children to explore and express the rage and hurt they feel when they are being sanctioned. Parents have needs and responsibilities which must be respected also.

There is also a paradox in Miller's thesis. She acknowledges that infants are naturally narcissistic, but is convinced that children will also outgrow their narcissism naturally. This narcissism lingers past childhood only when the child is forced to act and express altruism before it

occurs naturally. Waiting for altruism to occur naturally could certainly create problems in a multi-child family. Yet, Miller does focus on helping the child to express feelings and not on letting the child do whatever it wants.

If we proscribe the term carefully, we could say that Miller and other psychologists we have studied operate from a perspective which emphasizes grace. They emphasize the blessing and goodness of created beings rather than emphasizing original sin. These psychologists see humans as having a natural inclination towards health and growth.

Tillich also emphasizes grace in many ways and also offers many useful correctives for problems of authority. Authoritarians often justify their controlling behavior as being necessary due to the weakness and sinfulness of the masses. Tillich's reference to power as self-affirmation is a concept that would trouble poisonous pedagogues and those who overemphasize original sin. Some of Tillich's assumptions about the goodness of human nature are implied in his description how classical theology describes God's law as natural law. His stress on the importance of balancing "Lord" imagery of God with imagery which lifts up the nature of God's uniting love also provides a picture of Tillich's sense of the need for a healthy balance.

There are two current theologians who share an emphasis on God's grace and the importance of relatedness which parallels what I am trying to describe here. Matthew Fox has drawn on many Christian traditions, particularly

medieval mysticism, to rearticulate what he calls a Creation centered spirituality. Fox argues that the fall/redemption paradigm developed by Augustine has dominated Western Christianity particularly in the last three hundred years. Fox believes the dominance of this paradigm has been harmful in many ways. The fall/redemption paradigm is patriarchal and filled with unhealthy dualistic splits. It focuses myopically on original sin. It does not teach believers about care for the earth, justice-making or social transformation, play or pleasure. It is also frightened by passion, unfriendly to women, prophets, artists, and the "little ones" of human history.²

Fox urges replacing the fall\redemption paradigm with the creation centered spirituality. Fox describes creation spirituality as being holistic, focusing on original blessing, teaching about care for the earth, justice-making and social transformation. Creation spirituality celebrates passion, play and pleasure, and it is friendly to those who have suffered under sexism, racism and other historical forms of oppression.³

Henry Mitchell and Nicholas Cooper Lewter's Soul Theology is written from a very different context and uses quite different language from Fox's creation spirituality. Nevertheless, Soul theology shares many of creation theology's basic assumptions about what is needed to heal people and our world. Soul theology is the term Mitchell and Lewter have chosen to describe the core beliefs of black

folk theology which they have summarized in their book.

These core beliefs make up the shared belief system of blacks in America.⁴

The authors criticize most Western theology as being too abstractly intellectual and theoretically oriented. Mitchell and Lewter want to distinguish "core beliefs from theological niceties and technical formulations" because "True faith or core belief has to do with the response of all sectors of consciousness (rational, intuitive, and emotive in concert)."⁵ Whereas most Western theology begins with doctrinal assumptions and reasons from them, Soul theology has worked from experience.⁶

Mitchell and Lewter point out that Soul Theology "does not resemble . . . either conservative or liberal Christian traditions."⁷ Neither does it parallel any systematic theology. Rather than dealing with topics such as "the nature of being" or "revelation and reason" or the technicalities of the trinity, Soul theology "largely centers on the attributes of God that impinge on human experience."⁸

Mitchell and Lewter acknowledge the importance of confronting and repenting of one's evil deeds. But they insist that such activities never loose sight of the reality of

God's unconditional acceptance. Based on God's appraisal, it is possible to engage in healthy human self-esteem. . . . the grace of God offers unqualified love: freedom from divine condemnation and from neurotic dependence on the approval of others.⁹

The themes lifted up in Soul Theology include the providence of God, the justice of God, the goodness of God and

creation, the grace of God, the equality of persons, the uniqueness of persons and others. The authors use much more traditional theological language and imagery for God than Fox does. Yet, all the authors are lifting up and arguing for some of the same values and emphases.

Grace is one of those words that are so rich with meaning that sometimes different people use it to mean different things. While Fox and Mitchell and Lewter do not mean exactly the same thing by grace, I am trying to draw on that meaning that they do share.

Paul Tillich's sermon, "You Are Accepted" is a powerful reflection on grace which provides the link I am describing between Original Blessing and Soul Theology. In his sermon Tillich describes sin and grace as being closely

bound to each other. We do not even have a knowledge of sin unless we have already experienced the unity of life, which is grace. And conversely, we could not grasp the meaning of grace without having experienced the separation of life, which is sin.¹⁰

Fox's concern is that in the West we have so struggled to know our sinfulness that we have forgotten the original grace and unity of life. We no longer value that unity because we have forgotten it. Mitchell and Lewter emphasize that grace is all the more treasured by those who have experienced the separation and pain of sin.

Related to the issues of grace and human nature is the issue of the will. In Chapter 1's section on Alice Miller a quote from a book on pedagogy was presented which suggested

that it is good for a child to learn to follow another's will rather than its own. This seems consonant with much traditional fall/redemption theology in Christianity. The supposition that original sin has so perverted human will that one's will should not be trusted or obeyed is a common Christian belief. Yet, it is a very problematic belief. If we are to distrust our own will, whose will do we defer to? And an even more perplexing question is: Does not the act of deferring to another involve some act of will or judgment?

Living in any community or society necessitates some deference of one's will to the will of others. Thus, the need for what Fromm calls "rational authority" and what Tillich calls "authority in fact." Children do need to learn the necessity of balancing their own needs with the needs of others and the needs of the group. Children need to learn to recognize the effect their behavior has on others and to develop empathy. These are skills children will need to function in society. The question is when and how to teach such skills.

Alice Miller believes children will naturally outgrow their narcissism, if when parents set limits, they model empathy by helping their children articulate and express their feelings of rage, hurt, etc. Adler, Fromm, and Horney all concur that those who require power over others (who require that others meet their narcissistic needs) do so out of a sense of weakness, inferiority or childhood damage.

The difficulty is teaching children to discern how to balance their needs with the needs of the other and when it is appropriate to follow authority figures.

For most children, public school is the place they learn how to line up in an orderly fashion, be quiet, follow orders and not ask questions. A culture in which children must be taught that it is all right to say no to adults who touch them in uncomfortable ways, reflects both on the sickness of the abuser's self esteem and the sickness of child rearing that does not support or affirm children's rights. Children do need to experience limits and boundaries from the adults they interact with, but those limits should arise from actual human needs. Authority should be rational and "in fact," not an irrational "authority in principle."

In considering problems of the will, psychologist Roberto Assagioli has many helpful insights. Assagioli's writings about the will are very useful in sorting out the fuzzy and often conflicting views of will that most psychologists have. To a behaviorist will is an explanatory fiction, to some others the will is simply irrelevant by virtue of its relative powerlessness to affect human behavior. Those existentialist psychologists and others who have placed a great emphasis on the importance of the will have rarely done much to describe or clarify what they mean by the will or how the will works.

Assagioli's conception of the will can answer many

questions because it is at once a more comprehensive explanation of will and a more subtle one. Assagioli argues that the ineffectiveness attributed to the will is the result of a too narrow conception of the will. He agrees that the will is ineffective when it attempts to act in opposition to the imagination and other psychological functions. However, it is only an old-fashioned notion of the will which would operate in such a manner.¹¹

Assagioli argues that it is a narrow, Victorian conception of the will which is prevalent today. This will is seen as stern and forbidding, condemning and repressing most of the other aspects of human nature. This conception is a caricature of will according to Assagioli.

The true function of the will is not to act against the personality drives to force the accomplishment of one's purpose. The will has a directive and regulatory function; it balances and constructively utilizes all the other activities and energies of the human being without repressing any of them.¹²

Rather than the will being the power which runs the motor to move a ship, Assagioli suggests, the will is the helmsman who steers the ship to keep it on course.¹³

The strong will, Assagioli would agree, can often be ineffectual when it is disassociated from the skillful will. It is the skillful will which consists of the ability to obtain the desired results with the least possible expenditure of energy.

In order to use our will most skillfully, we need to understand our inner constitution, become acquainted with our many different functions, drives, desires, habit patterns, and the relation-

ships between them, so that at any one time we can activate and utilize those aspects of ourselves that already have the tendency to produce the specific action or condition we are aiming for.¹⁴

Controlling without suppressing is the goal. Suppression will push unwanted drives into the unconscious, while "control implies neither fear nor condemnation but mastery and regulation. In other words, control allows for expression, but expression in some harmless or useful way."¹⁵

Assagioli saw the need to befriend one's unconscious and win its cooperation. He warned against the danger of being too pedantic and serious which is reminiscent of Creation Spirituality's call for an appreciation of play. Assagioli argues that contests, playing and humor could all help win the unconscious' cooperation by interesting and amusing it. "A playful attitude detracts in no way from the effectiveness of a technique but eliminates the counter-currents of resistance and rebellion."¹⁶

A final contribution on the issues of grace and human nature and relatedness comes from a variety of feminist, process, relational and liberation thinkers. Perhaps, the Western world's obsession with the dangers and sinfulness of humanity are in part a reflection of our overemphasis on individuality. Because we have fostered unilateral concepts of power which deny the importance of relationships and in which the exercise of power tends to alienate persons from each other, we have felt a great need to keep the individual's will in check. Thus, poisonous pedagogues and others have developed a variety of techniques to keep people

from discovering their true selves and the sources of their own power and authority. If it were really true that individuals could only operate in hyper-individualistic ways, perhaps suppression of individuals would be an appropriate way to maintain order and community good. Such hyper-individualism is a myth, however, rather than a true reflection of reality. Our myths, nevertheless, do have a powerful effect on our behavior.

In a powerful and carefully written book Carol Gilligan explores the themes of relatedness and separation. Her book, In a Different Voice, provides a much needed feminist critique of psychological theories of identity and moral development.¹⁷

Gilligan demonstrates how male theory builders, by not taking into account differences in male\female socialization or sex differences, have developed theories for humans based on a male norm. This male norm has been described as human despite evidence that women didn't fit into the male defined pattern.¹⁸

Gilligan describes how issues of separation and attachment (relatedness) are experienced differently by men and women.

Since masculinity is defined through separation while femininity is defined through attachment, male gender identity is threatened by intimacy while female gender identity is threatened by separation. Thus, males tend to have difficulty with relationships, while females tend to have problems with individuation.¹⁹

The argument I am developing is that we in Western

society have greatly overemphasized the "male" experience. We have emphasized self-development and autonomy at any cost. We need to change our mythology and emphasis. We need to think more relationally. Women, minorities, and Third World peoples have been urging such changes for some time.

We need to change our Western mythology by encouraging a more relational view of reality and encouraging behavior which reflects that world view. This approach would be much healthier for both individuals and society than the suppression of individuals. The idea I am expressing here is echoed in Tillich and Loomer as well as many feminist, process and liberation thinkers.

People are better able to regulate themselves when they see themselves as part of a group which has claims on them. Their self-esteem and sense of security are less threatened when they see themselves in strong relationship groups. Responsibility to the group and loving concern for the welfare of others in the group provide the possibility of self-denial or sacrifice which is done out of love and concern. One sees contributing to the group and those one relates to as a form of self-affirmation because the group has so much to do with who one is. A more individualistic perspective sees self-denial and sacrifice as irrational and not self-affirming.

This discussion returns us to a question about human nature and the tension between a relational worldview and a

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fixed view of human nature. In a relational worldview, sin cannot be located only inside or only outside a person. A relational worldview which also values individuality must call for individual responsibility as well as recognizing the importance of context (systems or environment) in determining human behavior. A relational worldview, one hopes, could avoid the kind of dichotomy we often see in the approaches within the U.S. criminal justice system. One approach tries to ignore social causes of criminal activities, while the other makes criminals "victims" of society and often ignores the question of individual responsibility. Loomer posited relational power as being open to influence of others without losing identity. Retaining one's dignity and identity, therefore, despite an oppressive environment is a display of great power.

It is important to recognize that good counselors will not see "blaming" parents as providing any helpful solution to a client's difficulties. Good counselors search the past to discover how the environment (parents) and client interacted to create current difficulties. Blaming parents, or others, may provide some cathartic release to the client, and it does reflect parents' relatively greater power in the relationship. However, this "blaming" must always remain only a brief way station and not a final resting place. One's unhealthy parents were usually shaped by their own unhealthy parents, etc. The adult child must always move past blaming what happened yesterday and into accepting

responsibility for today and tomorrow. Those who have been victims must learn how they at times collude with those who seek to victimize them.

Many Western thinkers have emphasized the importance of individuation to a great extent while ignoring how individuation relates to our being in relationship. In fact, individuation is often set over against being in relationship. A relational world view does not call for a return to relationships in which individuality is lost, it merely recognizes that individuation takes place within a social context and that being in relationships continues to affect who we are and what we do. This brings up the practical question raised by Erich Fromm's idea that love overcomes separateness and maintains individuality at the same time. We shall explore that question with some practical examples in Chapter 5. Staying in a theoretical mode for a moment, both Virginia Satir and Assagioli have something to contribute.

Satir is a therapist who works primarily from a systems perspective which emphasizes the immediate social context and the importance of relationships in affecting individual behavior and self-esteem. Though her work focuses in many ways on the healthy functioning of the group, she sees individuation as being an important part of what makes the group function in a healthy way. Rather than setting individuation (or growing self-esteem) over against social relations, she sees them as positively correlated. She des-

cribes a nurturing family group as providing an atmosphere that encourages self-development and differentiation when she writes, "Feelings of worth can only flourish in an atmosphere where individual differences are appreciated, mistakes are tolerated, communication is open and rules are flexible.²⁰

Satir gives a more specific example of this relationship between high self-esteem (individuation) and healthy relatedness with the following description of how a person with high self esteem would choose a spouse or life partner.

In choosing a partner, he does not . . . seek someone with whom he feels safe or who will bolster his self-esteem. Because he already esteems himself, he is relatively independent of what others think of him (including his mate). So he can take the individuality of his mate into account without requiring, for his own safety, that the mate be an extension of him. In every way, self esteem, independence and individual uniqueness go together.²¹

Assagioli's discussion of the will also offers us a perspective in which individual health and self-development is linked with good relationships rather than set against them. "Since persons live inextricably in relationships, a 'good will' always involves harmonization with the wills of others and with nature."²² Assagioli's view of our relatedness to other humans and nature is very strong. He writes

Self-centeredness is deeply destructive to the cooperation without which a person cannot live a full life in community. This same principle applies to an individual's relation to nature and the universe. No person can take an arrogant stand and consider himself unrelated to the universe.²³

Finally, Assagioli's notions of "self" and "Self" provide an interesting complement to Fromm's idea that the goal of human existence is to overcome separateness while maintaining individuality. According to Assagioli the self is the center for one's psychological synthesis, while the Self is the center for one's spiritual synthesis. Assagioli describes the self as "acutely aware of itself as a distinct separate individual." He speaks in this context of the sense of solitude or aloneness often described by existentialist writers. The spiritual Self, in contrast, "is a sense of freedom, of expansion, of communication with other Selves and with reality, and there is a sense of Universality." The Self feels itself at the same time individual and universal.²⁴

NOTES

Chapter 3

¹ Alice Miller, The Drama of the Gifted Child (New York: Basic, 1981), viii. See also Thou Shalt Not Be Aware (New York: Meridian/New American Library, 1984), 300; and For Your Own Good, xi.

² Matthew Fox, Original Blessing (Santa Fe, N.M.: Bear & Co., 1983), 11.

³ Ibid., 11, 316-319.

⁴ Henry Mitchell and Nicholas Cooper Lewter, Soul Theology (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986), x.

⁵ Ibid., 3-4.

⁶ Ibid., 6-7.

⁷ Ibid., 11.

⁸ Ibid., 12.

⁹ Ibid., 79.

¹⁰ Paul Tillich, The Shaking of the Foundations (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1948), 155.

¹¹ Roberto Assagioli, Psychosynthesis: A Manual of Principles and Techniques (New York: Hobbs, Dorman, 1965), 7-8.

¹² Roberto Assagioli, The Act of Will (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 10.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 15-16.

¹⁵ Assagioli, Psychosynthesis, 108.

¹⁶ Ibid., 137.

¹⁷ Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

18 *Ibid.*, 151.

19 *Ibid.*, 8.

20 Clinebell, quoting Satir, 220-221.

21 Virginia Satir, Conjoint Family Therapy, 3rd ed.
(Palo Alto, Ca.: Science & Behavior Books, 1983), 67.

22 Clinebell, 270.

23 *Ibid.*, 271.

24 Assagioli, Psychosynthesis, 87.

CHAPTER 4

**Relatedness, Power, Authority and Obedience
in the Counseling Relationship**

This chapter concentrates on exploring the proper type of relatedness that should exist between counselor and client. Issues of power, authority and obedience within the counseling encounter which can distort healthy relatedness are also discussed. This chapter attempts to apply to the counseling situation some of the insights gathered in the previous three chapters. The chapter begins by looking at some dangers in the counseling relationship and reflecting on how a counselor should develop a plan of treatment. A more detailed examination of power imbalances in both life and the counseling relationship is followed by additional reflection on the client/counselor relationship. Some of the counselor's responsibilities are noted along with a discussion of the therapeutic value of empathy and role modeling. After some concluding thoughts on the types of power a counselor has, we will return to the theme of grace and examine its place in the healing process.

A Risky Relationship

Psychoanalysis . . . is a dynamic psychological process involving two people, a patient and a psychoanalyst, during which the patient insists that the analyst be one-up while desperately trying to put him one-down, and the analyst

insists that the patient remain one-down in order to help him learn to become one-up. The goal of the relationship is the amicable separation of analyst and patient.¹

This humorous description of therapy is unfortunately too often true. Whenever power is defined or felt to be power over another, this kind of struggle to be one-up on the other person results. It is my contention that this struggle is not one that should take place in a counseling situation because power in such a situation should be power with rather than power over.

I believe firmly with Erich Fromm that it is those who lack a sense of power to do or power within themselves who seek to gain power over others. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for therapists (from every kind of training background and often not consciously) to seek power over clients. As Carl Goldberg observes, "most of the ethical abuses in the practice of psychotherapy [are not] violations of professional ethics."² Rather than being a result of the therapist's theoretical framework, this desire to gain power over a client is usually the result of the personal weaknesses and insecurities of the therapist. Though some theoretical frameworks do lend themselves to a hierarchical orientation more easily than others, I believe that therapists who put their clients' needs above their theoretical positions will always have a better chance at helping to bring about true healing. Appropriate empathy by the therapist for the client can take place in almost any theoretical framework if the therapist has the requisite character

strength, integrity and recognition of their own human weaknesses and limitations. Without this recognition of boundaries and limits, therapists will see their own issues in their clients' problems and push their own solutions onto clients. Clients of such therapists may become indoctrinated through therapy, but they will not truly heal.

It is important to remember that the counseling situation, whatever else it may be, always remains a human encounter. I have found Carl Goldberg's book Therapeutic Partnership very helpful in considering these problems. He describes psychotherapy as an interpersonal partnership between therapist and client. However,

For client and therapist to operate in a climate of informed consent, not only the practical considerations, but also the underlying existential and philosophical assumptions of the conduct of psychotherapy need to be revealed to the client.³

Goldberg emphasizes the importance of clarifying the reasons for being in a therapeutic encounter rather than having both client and therapist simply infer those reasons.⁴

Psychotherapy as a "contractual partnership"

may not always be a welcome prospect for the client, however. Unlike the traditional medical model, in which the client places a blind trust in the practitioner's knowledge and healing powers, contractual psychotherapy replaces magic with hard work. The client may initially feel it is unfair to assume collaborative responsibilities when he is feeling confused, exhausted, and distressed. Because he experiences himself as inadequate, he willingly pays a therapist to resolve his difficulties.⁵

One beginning assumption of this author is that no therapy is value-free. Neither is there such a thing as a

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value-free counselor or value-free client. This reality, which has been denied by many psychologists who claim that their work is scientific and objective, demands a more self-conscious and gentle treatment of the issues of values within a therapeutic relationship. Value and religious questions should become a relevant issue in determining whether a given client/counselor relationship is viable. It is possible that the values of client and therapist could be so far apart as to make a counseling relationship inadvisable. More often, however, it is the simple concern that what is not discussed can become a source of mystification or even anxiety. In summary, counselors need to be self-aware of their own investment in given values and beliefs in order to create a climate of genuine openness and respect for the client's values and beliefs.⁶ The goal of therapy is not for the therapist to get the client to adopt the therapist's values. Thus, it is important to explore value issues before beginning a relationship, and it is important to recognize when the values of counselor and client are too far apart for them to work together constructively.

The counselor's authority should be rational rather than an authority in principle or of place. The counselor should exercise relational power with the client. Having a power advantage over the client since the client came to the counselor for help, the counselor has a greater responsibility to sustain healthy relatedness -- not all responsibility, but greater responsibility. The responsibility to

sustain healthy relatedness on the part of the counselor may require setting limits and conditions for the counseling relationship.

A Treatment Plan

In each counseling encounter the process should include at least the following steps. In the beginning time clients should orient their counselors about themselves while counselors spend some time providing structure and process for future therapeutic encounters. The number of visits, goals of therapy, rules or covenants, etc., should all be discussed. In the middle time client and therapist work together renegotiating end time, goals, or whatever, if the client or therapist feels that is important. End time requires some review of the growth that has taken place in counseling to provide a helpful reference, further goals for the client to work on independently, saying good-byes, dealing with some grieving and finally looking forward with a realistic hope.

The process by which persons move toward the goals of therapy depend to a large degree on what the goals of therapy are. Though most psychologists lay out their theories of the human mind and establish their ideas of counseling from that (sometimes it is the reverse process), it is important to realize that different types of people coming in with different (or even the same) problems will require different treatment approaches.

Howard Clinebell's comments at the end of each section of Contemporary Growth Therapies and his article "Ego Psy-

chology and Pastoral Counseling" are both very useful in helping one choose a an approach that is well matched to both client and problem. While insight therapies may be very effective for reasonably intelligent and well-functioning people, those with weakened egos may need a supportive-growth approach instead. Those with poorly developed conscience or super-ego, on the other hand, may need a behavioral or reality therapy approach rather than either the insight or supportive-growth approach.⁷

There are several resources then for enabling the process of healing and growth to take place and the one to choose depends on the client and the presenting problem. Sometimes insight is sufficient. To understand what was done to one as a child so that one can grieve for one's lost childhood (Miller), or to learn how growing up in a specific society affected one's development may help one to choose other behavior. Sometimes the mere awareness that other behaviors are possible is sufficient to produce changes. Other times more specific exercises are needed to help develop new skills. Sometimes providing caring support and a listening ear is all that is needed. The listening ear and caring of the therapist provides the client with a sense of acceptance and affirmation. Once the client truly receives that acceptance and affirmation (grace, if you will), they are then free to change. They no longer feel a need to justify themselves and can turn their energy in other directions. In each of these cases, though, empower-

ment of the client must occur. Clients must realize through their insight, the development of new skills or their sense of support that they are stronger and more capable than before. Counselors must be careful that their own use of power in the client/counselor relationship is empowering clients rather than rescuing them, because rescuing only reinforces clients' weaknesses and does not build their strengths.

Assagioli points out that while some people will have a definite vision or plan for where they want to go, others find it difficult to build such a program. They live more intuitively and spontaneously. Therapists should appreciate the value of both of these orientations, Assagioli urges but seek to point out their limitations and supplement them with the strengths of the other perspective. Those with a definite plan need to guard against too rigid an approach which will not take account of and adjust to new insights as they develop. The intuitives, on the other hand, must guard against becoming too passive and accepting as intuitions and higher aspirations promptings which in reality originate from unconscious forces, wishes and desires.⁸

Assagioli also lifts up the obvious but usually ignored point that the counselor's plan must take adequate account of the client's real social context. The therapist must determine goals based on the client's cultural and intellectual level, but also based on issues which have nothing to do with the psychological or scientific aspects of therapy.

The amount of time the client can attend or afford, etc. The therapist's plan should be worked out with the client based on the goal of achieving maximum growth within the economic and social constraints that exist rather than assuming each client will be able to complete a predetermined lengthy regimen which the therapist feels is necessary. Part of this process requires saving time in therapy which can be accomplished by teaching clients exercises which they can then carry out by themselves on their own time.⁹

Goldberg, recognizing that therapists cannot abandon their expertise, experience or own personality, notes that a therapist "cannot let the client decide for him how he is to meet the needs the client wishes to have addressed."¹⁰ Rather, these issues and concerns require "intensive exploration and negotiation in which the concerns of both agents can be explored."¹¹ Such a contract would specify both "the negotiable and nonnegotiable aspects of the therapeutic relationship."¹²

Power Imbalances and Equity

Goldberg's sees the absence of equity and balance as the underlying cause of emotional disturbances which bring persons into therapy.

Emotional disturbance . . . is a result of deterioration and disequilibrium of equity and balance that an individual experiences in relationship to significant others in his normative system. If equity and balance are essential interpersonal dimensions for maximizing one's place in society, the client must be taught how to negotiate direc-

tly for restoration of these relations in his interpersonal and societal transactions.¹³

Continuing in this line of thought, Goldberg gives his impression that patients he has seen in a variety of psychotherapeutic settings are all "seeking either justice from the social institutions that regulate their lives or equity (fairness) in their relationships with significant others."¹⁴ Such people are in therapy because "they experience others as treating them arbitrarily and unfairly."¹⁵

This thesis of Goldberg's brings to mind the comments of both Loomer and Tillich on the inevitability of inequalities (unfairness) in power and their arguments about the appropriate or just responses to such inequalities.

Goldberg goes on to discuss how childhood experiences of inequity can color adult encounters.

People tend to perceive the universe in terms of their early relationships with significant others. Individuals who were made to feel powerless and incapable of establishing fair exchanges with significant others tend to perpetuate these feelings into contemporary relations. As long as an individual believes that he is incapable of freely contracting in a fair manner, he must either remain dependent, as a patient or as a child, or be involved in aggressively active manipulating or changing of the rules to his own advantage.¹⁶

Goldberg concludes that the concepts of equity and balance provide a measuring stick for judging the quality or state of our interpersonal relationships. Persons who experience inequity often either play the victim role or retaliate inappropriately.

Persons in significant relationships who are regarded by their partners according to arbitrary

rather than explicitly negotiated standards of conduct experience their relationships as frustrating and unfair. In order to restore balance in the relationship, they react with retaliatory mechanisms. These observations suggest to me that attention to the normative system structuring the client's relationships must be combined with psychodynamic formulation in working with clients involved in conflictual interpersonal relationships.¹⁷

The concepts of equity and balance must also be an essential element in judging the quality of any therapeutic relationship, Goldberg argues.

Goldberg's book urges the necessity for exploring such concerns as "the unspoken power of the psychotherapist" and "the restoration of the client's power."¹⁸

When a therapist and a patient meet for the first time, each comes to the encounter with an implicit set of fantasies, expectations, and demands about what will happen as a result of their meeting together. When these expectations remain hidden or inappropriately addressed, there results . . . an unproductive impasse, if not an outright vitiating consequence for either or both the patient and the therapist.¹⁹

Too many of those who seek psychotherapy do so lacking knowledge of reliable guidelines for choosing a therapist. They are unable to sort through the wheat or chaff or to find a match for their own problems and personality without spending time and money in therapy.

Too many people enter psychotherapy without giving sufficient consideration to the complexity and risk of a meaningful psychotherapy experience.²⁰

Both client and therapist bring their own power into their encounter. The therapist, however, has a variety of means to try to enforce power over the client. Clients, however, though they rarely realize it hold a potent power

over the therapist.

The client's inherent power threatens the therapist's status, reputation, and financial livelihood because, without clients, psychotherapists would have to find other sources for these commodities.²¹

It is clients who grant to their therapists the expert power or the authority power to influence them. However, it is vital to recognize that clients do this because they are in a particularly vulnerable place in their lives. Like sojourners and widows in the Old Testament, clients usually are experiencing some sense of powerlessness or of being out of control.

From an idealized perspective clients as purchasers of services have a right to define what those services will be and how they should be carried out. However, because of clients' desperation they often barter their rationality and power

in exchange for the innocence of the child and the protection of a powerful ally, the therapist.²²

As Goldberg observes, if the power bases inherent in the roles of client and therapist are not delineated, then therapists cannot be free to exercise their "influence with the client in an open, informed, and negotiable manner."²³

Therapists must teach clients how to use their power rationally or how to regain lost power. In fact,

The therapist, having gained an unfair advantage of power over the client due to the client's self-denigration, must become the client's advocate by not permitting the client's shame and guilt to deprive him of his inherent powers and rights within the therapeutic relationship.²⁴

Clients must be given the responsibility to use their power to contribute to the healing process.

The concepts of transference and counter-transference are also helpful in counseling. Transference occurs when clients transfer their feelings towards others (often their parents or other authorities) to their therapists. They read into their therapists attributes of others and attempt to recreate past struggles with these others in their relationship with the therapist. Counter-transference occurs when therapists project their own relationship issues and struggles onto their clients. They recreate their struggles with others when counseling clients.

Freud believed counselors should guard against counter-transference, but that they should become a blank screen to facilitate a client's transference. One need not believe counselors should become a blank screen to appreciate the contribution of these concepts, however. Transference will take place without the counselor presenting a blank screen due to the dynamics of unequal power and role inherent in the therapeutic situation. Clients recognize this power imbalance however much therapists may wish to deny it. This power imbalance is bound to bring up for the clients previous situations of power imbalance (most notably with parents), and it is important to be aware of how these connections can distort the client/therapist relationship but also shed light on the client's needs for growth. The recognition that countertransference occurs when counselors

bring their own unconscious and unresolved issues into the client/therapist relationship is important so that therapists may be vigilant against how their own distortions and repetition compulsions can adversely affect the therapeutic relationship.

The Client/Counselor Relationship

In recognizing that therapy involves a human encounter, it is important to realize that our humanity and personalities have an effect on the client/counselor relationship. In noting how often this obvious point is overlooked Virginia Satir observes that

Any therapy . . . involves an interaction between at least two people. The focus is usually on the person of the client, who is supposed to have 'the experience,' with little attention paid to the leader of the interaction. Yet the person of the therapist always impacts the therapy. When the therapist denies this impact, he leaves out of his awareness a key element of the therapy. . . . We often underestimate the importance of the therapist-patient relationship and overestimate our cognitive contribution.²⁵

Tillich's description of how taking an action which dehumanizes another results in dehumanizing the actor as well as the receiver is echoed by some therapists. Tillich's observation that to treat another as an object turns oneself into an object, has serious implications for the therapeutic encounter.

When technique is made paramount, everything is lost because the very essence of the authentic relationship is that one does not manipulate but turns towards another with one's whole being.²⁶

This is perhaps the place in which to suggest the

importance of conveying a real sense of presence and being there for a person. This, which requires occasional confession of the therapist's own limitations and weaknesses, is most helpful.

Elsewhere Goldberg stresses the need to rethink and restructure the traditional therapeutic model, particularly the relationship that model suggests between therapist and patient. Goldberg shares this quotation from Dublin which says that the traditional therapeutic model

holds that the therapist, having already had his training, has little need to grow experientially in the therapeutic situation. He must, in fact, specifically guard against experiential rather than cognitive, rational involvements, for failure to do so is generally regarded as overinvolvement or "countertransference." Thus, although disclosure of self is an inherent part of the traditional model of therapy, it is almost all one way, from patient to therapist.²⁷

Satir also points out the absurdity of denying the human relationship that transpires in a therapeutic encounter. Therapists as humans are susceptible to some of the same distortions of the therapeutic relationship as their clients.

The therapist can be in the same position as the patient, denying, distorting or projecting needs. It is possible for a patient or a client to activate something within the therapist of which the latter is unaware. . . . Therapists should recognize that they are just as vulnerable as patients.²⁸

Satir also makes a point similar to that of Goldberg about how pervasively early life experiences can influence current relationships and the therapeutic relationship. Specifically she cautions about the danger of repeating

dysfunctional childhood learning experiences in the therapeutic relationship.

When the prevailing model of therapeutic transaction, the authoritarian doctor-patient relationship, is experienced as one of dominance and submission, the patient and therapist can easily move into a power play which tends to reinforce childhood learning experiences. Throughout the therapeutic experience, the therapist may unwittingly replicate the negative learning experiences of the patient's childhood and call it treatment.²⁹

Continuing on, Satir points out how the dominance-submission model increases the risk of the therapist's distortion of the therapeutic relationship and the therapist's abuse of power. She observes that

The dominance and submission model increases chances for the therapist to live out her own ego needs for control. Manifestations of this control can appear to be benevolent . . . or malevolent.³⁰

Satir also goes on to makes a definition of power which is reminiscent of other such definitions we have explored earlier. Satir's definition also presents a dichotomy between two types of power. However, she reflects specifically on how these two types of power are used in a therapeutic relationship. She observes that

Power has two faces: one, is controlling the other; the second is empowering the other. The use of power is a function of the self of the therapist. It is related to the therapist's self-worth, which governs the way in which the therapist handles her ego needs. Use of power is quite independent of any therapeutic technique or approach, although there are some therapeutic approaches which actually are based on the therapist maintaining a superior position. (Dreikurs, 1960). There are also cases where there is outright and conscious exploitation by the therapist and some even justify their aggressive, sexual or

other unprofessional behavior on the grounds that it is beneficial to the patient. (Langs, 1985).³¹

Responsibilities of the Counselor

Accepting the suffering servant model of service or some of Loomer's relational power imagery has implications for the counselor's responsibilities in the therapeutic encounter. Adopting such a model we must see the counselor (as the person with greater initial power) as having special responsibilities to sustain the therapeutic nature of the relationship and to empower the client. One of those particular responsibilities involves the belief system of the therapist. Satir observes that the therapist's beliefs relate to the spiritual dimension in therapy. She asserts that

People already have what they need to grow and the therapist's task is to enable patients to utilize their own resources. If I believe that human beings are sacred, then when I look at their behavior, I will attempt to help them to live up to their own sacredness. If I believe that human beings are things to be manipulated, then I will develop ways to manipulate them. If I believe that patients are victims, then I will try to rescue them. In other words, there is a close relationship between what I believe and how I act. The more in touch I am with my beliefs, and acknowledge them, the more I give myself freedom to choose how to use those beliefs.³²

Another important responsibility of the therapist is to develop an image of health for each client. Rather than defining clients as sick individuals who need our help, clients should be seen as individuals struggling towards growth. It is important to diagnose problem areas or limitations of clients in order to help them strengthen these

areas and discover the sources of their limitations. However, it is equally important to discover and recognize the strengths and resources already within clients and to image them as healthier and more integrated than they are when they come in for therapy. Both Milton Erickson and Roberto Assagioli emphasize the importance of this therapeutic task. Assagioli is particularly eloquent on the topic when he writes

It can help a great deal if the therapist has a conviction, drawn from direct experience, that regardless of how wretched, confused or sick the individual may appear on the surface, there is this inner center of psychological health, of wisdom, of purpose which is there to be evoked.³³

Some of what has been said in the previous paragraph about Erickson and Assagioli is echoed in Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis. Berne's "Pygmalion effect" recognizes the importance of relating to persons in terms of their strengths and not their weaknesses. Howard Clinebell, quoting Berne, points out that patients will respond in a way that mirrors the expectations of their therapist. Counselors expecting weak and unhealthy egos will encourage such functioning in their clients, while those expecting healthy functioning will encourage better functioning.³⁴

Rabbi Friedman's book Generation to Generation presents many helpful ideas about a counselor's responsibilities. Friedman provides some helpful insight on the danger of rescuing people. He observes that thresholds for physical and emotional pain are lower when we function dependently and higher when we are motivated to accomplish something.

Interrelationally, however, when member A of a system quickly spares member B from pain, B becomes dependent on A and thus B's threshold for pain drops. Thus, member A needs to increase their threshold for tolerating B's pain, so that B can increase his or her own pain threshold. This process will be a painful one for B at first as it is the giving up of an addiction, but an increased sense of power and self-direction will eventually be the reward.³⁵

Gestalt theory posits one of the roles of the therapist as being that of a skillful frustrator. While providing some supportive contact, the therapist is also called on to thwart the client's dependency needs and other aliveness-avoiding manipulations.³⁶ This is somewhat similar to Rabbi Friedman's rule about helping members of a system to increase their threshold for withstanding others' pain.

Further defining the responsibilities and limits of therapists' responsibilities Satir specifies that

Therapists are responsible for the initiation and continuation of the therapy process. They are not in charge of the patients within that process.³⁷

Power plays often illicit defensive reactions from clients, and therapists are often trained how to overcome the defensiveness of clients who are perceived as over-defended. While there may be some truth to saying that clients are overdefended from a functional perspective, it would be wrong to say they are overdefended in an absolute sense. They are overdefended now because in the past their overdefendedness was probably a healthy and appropriate

response to a dysfunctional situation in which they were raised or found themselves. Satir points out that clients' defenses are not to be overcome or forced out by the therapist, but rather the therapist should seek to encourage a safe climate in which such defenses are seen by the client as being unnecessary and in the way.³⁸

Otto Rank offers several useful concepts and techniques. His emphasis on the birth trauma and on separation anxiety is reminiscent of some of Fromm's thought concerning the human situation of needing to overcome separateness while maintaining one's individuality.³⁹ Rank's valuing of resistance as a demonstration of the client's increasing will is reminiscent of Fritz Perls' view of strengthening the client through engaging in struggle. It is also similar to a comment of Alice Miller's in Thou Shalt Not Be Aware.

It is not the worst that can happen if a power struggle develops between the two, for this is an indication that the patient is still showing signs of life and is searching for autonomy.⁴⁰

Another part of the therapist's plan should involve Milton Erikson's notion of utilization. This concept, that whatever the client brings you use,⁴¹ is an affirmation of the client's ability and wisdom. It respects clients and causes therapists to work with clients rather than push them to fit into a "typical" client. Utilization generally has an affirming side to it. It suggests that people have already journeyed a part of the way to making themselves better.

Assagioli also urges a pragmatic attitude which seeks to respond to the immediate interests of the client. By meeting clients on the ground of their immediate major preoccupations we are sure to "capture his interest and to create the needed rapport."⁴²

Friedman's responsibility triangle points out an obvious but common misconception under which most people operate. It is not possible to make another member of a system responsible by trying to make them responsible. The very act of trying to make someone responsible removes their own responsibility.⁴³ This is a lesson that both individuals and institutions who often operate from a parental mode need to learn.

It is at this point that Satir brings in the concept of congruence as the primary means by which a therapist creates a safe environment for the client.

Congruence develops trust. This is the basis for the emotional honesty between therapist and patient which is the key to healing.⁴⁴

She goes on,

Therapy is an intimate experience. For people to grow and change they need to be able to allow themselves to become open, which makes them vulnerable. When they are vulnerable, they need protection. It is the therapist's responsibility to create a context in which people feel and are safe, and this requires sensitivity to one's own state.⁴⁵

Satir defines incongruence as occurring when she tries to be something she is not, when she withholds something she knows or when she says something she does not mean.⁴⁶ In regard to an appropriate response to a client's defensive-

ness, Satir notes that the "presence of resistance is a manifestation of fear and calls for the utmost in honesty, congruence and trust on the part of the therapist."⁴⁷ Counselors must tread a careful line between the loving, non-judgmental acceptance of clients and the job of calling clients to task for their refusal to take responsibility and do the hard work required for growth.

Empathy

The element of empathetic identification is also quite important in establishing a healing rapport with clients. Too often clients receive from their therapists a sense of being diagnosed and treated which makes clients feel like a "thing" being manipulated by the therapist. This dehumanized feeling of being an object is probably the result of two things. One reason is the therapist's own need to create a status difference in order to feel superior (one-up) to the client. To do this therapists must remain in the healer role while clients stay in the sick role. (There is no place for a wounded healer in this model!) Another reason is therapists' own lack of empathy and their fear of "contracting" the client's condition which makes them repress their empathetic feelings for the client. On the problem of empathy Frieda Fromm-Reichmann has written that as practitioners "we differ from our patients not in kind but only in degree."⁴⁸ Erich Fromm also has some helpful comments to make about the central importance of empathy. Contrasting himself to Freudian analysts he says,

I must feel within myself what the patient is talking about before I have any real understanding of the patient as a person. The patient himself may not be aware of what he is saying, but I must feel it. This is what you might call a humanistic premise; that there is nothing human which is alien to us. Everything is in me; I am a little child, I'm a grownup, I'm a murderer, and I'm a saint; I'm narcissistic, and I'm destructive. There is nothing in the patient which I do not have in me. And only insofar as I can muster within myself those experiences about which the patient is telling me either explicitly or implicitly, only if they arouse an echo within myself, can I know what the patient is talking about and give back to him what he's really saying. Then something very strange happens; The patient does not have the feeling that I'm talking about something alien to him--he does not feel that I'm talking about him or that I'm talking down to him--instead he feels that I'm talking about something we both share. . . . Once the patient feels that I talk not just about him but about something human which is in both of us, there is no more danger that the patient will feel embarrassed about saying anything.⁴⁹

There is another important value of empathy in the healing process. A client may have an easier time believing that God can know all our evil and still love and forgive us, if the pastoral counselor as a representative of God has been able to identify empathetically with the client's brokenness and evil and has also modeled love and forgiveness.

Role Modeling

Empathy can become reciprocal at times. This can sometimes happen when clients learn by the example of their counselor. Good counseling techniques alone will not help clients become more responsible for their lives. In discussing role modeling, Goldberg observes,

For the client to become a more responsible and effective person, he needs to be given responsi-

bility for collaborating in his own emotional growth. This endeavor requires a partnership between therapist and client. The practitioner serves as a role model. The client will be no more willing to struggle for meaning in his journey into self than he senses the practitioner is⁵⁰ in his own personal and interpersonal journeys.

The counselor then can contribute to the client's growth (in part) by serving as a role model of one who is also in the process of self-exploration and growth. The concept of being a wounded healer has to do both with developing empathy for those being helped and providing a role model so that they will learn to help themselves. Adolf Guggenbuhl-Craig discusses how this role-modeling process can help clients.

By looking our own professional shadow in the eye, we show our analysand that the unpleasant sides of life must also be faced. . . . If a patient gets wind of this shadow, it is crucial for the further progress of therapy that we be capable of admitting to him our own backsliding into the unconscious and the professional shadow no matter how painful such an admission may be. The patient, after all, must also face up to painful insights. By constantly trying to spot the workings of our psychotherapeutic shadow, to catch it red-handed, we help our patients in their own confrontations with the dark brother. If we fail to do this, all the patient learns from us is how to fool himself and the world.⁵¹

Counselors role model for clients when they acknowledge that they are working through their own wounds and weaknesses.

In a fascinating article titled "Implications of the Wounded-Healer Paradigm for the Use of the Self in Therapy,"⁵² Grant Miller and De Witt Baldwin, Jr. relate the danger that can befall therapeutic encounters in which therapists are not in touch with their own woundedness.

Denial and repression of one's brokenness and vulnerability by itself may rob a healer of psychic energy and contribute to burnout. The act of affirming common human brokenness and vulnerability can bring lifegiving energy and healing to both healer and patient.⁵³

In the quote below Satir, in commenting on the importance of the therapist providing role modeling, also makes comments about influence which are very similar to those of Loomer and Niebuhr.

In the growth model, the therapist makes the point by his own behavior that there is nothing that cannot be dealt with openly and honestly, nor is there any substitute in therapy or any human relationship for a human being's learning to use himself and his own personality - not only using himself to influence others but, when appropriate, letting go and being influenced by others.⁵⁴

In conclusion Satir notes that because of the therapeutic encounter the therapist will influence the client.

The therapist . . . provides an example for growth, either positively or negatively. The vision presented by the traditional analyst is that of withdrawal, noninvolvement, noncommitment, and the virtual elimination of looking, talking, and touching as effective means of communication in relationship. In the growth model, the therapist sets the example of an active, learning, fallible human being who is willing to cope honestly and responsibly with whatever confronts him, including his own vulnerabilities.⁵⁵

Satir describes therapists in the growth model as being unthreatened to look at their own vulnerabilities, etc. This notion is very reminiscent of Loomer's comment about persons of greater size being unthreatened by others.

Satir in pointing out the importance of role modeling growth and learning also points to such behavior as a survival tool for the therapist.

One way to avoid "burnout" is to keep growing and learning. A great part of our behavior is learned from modeling and therapists can model ways of learning and growing.⁵⁶

Types of Counselor Power

From this brief survey of the issues of power and authority in counseling, we can see the importance of identifying the power that both client and therapist bring to the therapeutic encounter in order to make the best use of the power of both persons. Otherwise power will be used in a mystifying, non-consensual way.

Too many therapists use power over clients to change clients and gratify the therapist's own needs. Other therapists, by trying to avoid using power over clients, delude themselves into thinking they have abdicated all their power. By trying to hide their power they also misuse and distort it.

To use language that helps us review the previous two chapters, this same point can be made using some of the dual definitions of power and authority laid out earlier. The therapist's power should not be a power of domination, a power over, or a unilateral power. It should be a power of potency, a power with, a power to do, a relational or mutual power. Likewise the counselor's authority should not be an irrational authority or an authority in principle. Rather, it should be a rational authority and authority in fact. Unfortunately, studies have shown that the counseling relationship is particularly vulnerable to abuses. These abuses can be malicious and intentional, or they can be well-

intended or even unconscious. Counselors are obligated to try to mitigate any such damages by empowering their clients and recognizing their own human limitations and temptations.

Alice Miller observes that

It is not an act of cruelty for an analyst to misunderstand a patient but rather an unfortunate circumstance closely related to his own training analysis; it can therefore be helpful for both parties if the analyst can admit his limitations. The patient is put in a difficult position, on the other hand, if the analyst explains that he understands his patient but that the patient "is refusing" to accept the analyst's interpretation because he, the patient, wants to be more clever, grand, and powerful and make everyone else look small and stupid.⁵⁷

Grace in Counseling

At this point we return briefly to Karen Horney's notions of the idealized self and its search for glory to note how these concepts help illuminate the healing process in therapy. In Chapter 1 we described the search for glory as a search "to justify and substantiate the idealized self."⁵⁸ This search is intended to compensate for actual feelings of lack of acceptance. For healing to occur, clients must give up the search for glory and the idealized self. Only when they feel accepted for their true self can they begin to grow and change. Their energy can then shift from self-justification towards self-acceptance and eventually self-improvement. A counselor must try to help the client feel less fearful and more accepted without reinforcing the idealized self the client has brought to therapy. This can be particularly difficult as the client, usually

coming in at a time of high stress and vulnerability, may cling ever more desperately to their idealized self because of their intense need to feel good about themselves.

This need to feel good about oneself is not restricted merely to the psychological realm, however. Theology has addressed this same dilemma with different language. This author once developed some assumptions about the place of grace in healing to share with a class. Later, while working in an alcohol and drug treatment center, he found these assumptions to be most convincingly affirmed as he saw individuals struggle through their pain and begin to heal. These assumptions are presented below.

1. People have a great deal invested in preserving\ defending a positive self-image to themselves and their counselor.
2. A well grounded and healthy self-image can only come about by recognizing and accepting grace.
3. Trying to maintain a positive self-image without grace tends to lead people towards a defensive, unhealthy self-image which often gives such persons a distorted sense of reality.
4. God is always allied with the forces in life which urge the acceptance of grace and growth in positive self-image.
5. Grace cannot be accepted without recognition of our sin\brokenness\limitations.

All this talk of grace does not, of course, let us off

the hook for trying to be the best we can be. We are called to be good stewards of the gifts we have been given, and to let the image of God shine through us. But we must always remember that we are loved for who we are, not for what we do.

No matter what we do, we cannot earn God's love. The minute we think we can earn God's love by performing the right deeds, we have slipped into idolatry. For those of us working in people professions, accepting grace in our own lives is especially important because if we cannot accept God's gracious love for us, then we certainly cannot convey that grace to clients or role-model accepting grace.

There is a concluding thought which has not been adequately addressed in the preceding material. This regards the place of God in the healing process. This is where the concept of power as participation fits. As healers we can participate in God's healing work. We do not control the healing but we can participate in it, and we can thus role-model for and encourage our clients to also open themselves to participating in God's healing work.

NOTES

Chapter 4

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² Carl Goldberg, Therapeutic Partnership: Ethical Concerns in Psychotherapy (New York: Springer, 1977), 3.

³ Ibid., ix.

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⁵ Ibid., 14.

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⁷ Howard Clinebell, "Ego Psychology and Pastoral Counseling," Pastoral Psychology 14, no. 131 (Feb. 1963): 26-36.

⁸ Assagioli, Psychosynthesis, 26-27.

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¹⁰ Goldberg, 44.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 12-13.

¹⁴ Ibid., 20-21.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 22.

¹⁷ Ibid., 28.

¹⁸ Ibid., 2.

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- 33 Clinebell, Contemporary Growth Therapies, 272.
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- 38 Ibid. 20-21.
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- 42 Assagioli, 86.
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- 44 Baldwin and Satir, 21.

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51 Adolf Guggenbuhl-Craig, Power in the Helping Professions (Dallas: Spring Publs., 1971), 30.

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CHAPTER 5

Pitfalls and Possibilities for Pastoral Counselors

Institutionalized religion has had both good and bad effects on people. How a religion functions in a society is a combination of the belief system of the religion and the social context in which the believers live. Some combinations are life giving while others are stifling.

For religion to play a positive role in our lives we must be sensitive to how our beliefs play themselves out in our social context. This requires a certain amount of critical perspective on both our tradition and how we incarnate that tradition in our lives.

As pastoral counselors we must also be sensitive to how religious issues play out in the lives of our clients. The majority of patients I worked with in an alcohol/drug treatment program had a horrible image of God. Their God was cold, distant, judgmental and angry. The religious beliefs of these patients were no resource at all until their images of God changed. This chapter explores some pitfalls and possibilities for pastoral counselors and then surveys a variety of theological and scriptural resources for dealing with power, authority and obedience.

Pitfalls

One pitfall is that the pastoral counselor combines the

power of two different roles, the expert power of the psychologist and the authority power of the minister as God's or the church's spokesperson. Different clients will respond to those roles in different ways. However, it is important for the pastoral counselor to be sensitive to the ways in which clients may "give up" their power in a mystified reliance on the expertise or authority of the pastoral counselor.

A second pitfall is the danger that might arise with particular counseling models. Though no school is immune to the dangers of power abuse, some schools tend more towards an authoritarian approach. Behavioral, psychoanalytic or other approaches where the therapist is an "interpretive" expert require special alertness to abuse. A mirror-image danger of an authoritarian approach is the anti-authoritarian approach. In these approaches, such as in client-centered and some Gestalt therapies, the therapist can deny having any power or authority. Thus, the therapist masks the reality of what is happening in the interplay of powers.

A third pitfall comes from various theological models. An overemphasis on obedience/authority models is one danger. People in positions of lesser power, children, women, minorities, the poor, etc. tend to be on the receiving end of lectures on obedience. Original sin, if overemphasized, also has a damaging effect which can blunt the possibilities of healing.

A fourth pitfall can lay in the counselor's personality. Counselors need to recognize their own limits and not expect to be able to heal all people. They must know when to refer a prospective client or parishioner. Sometimes counselors must refer because they lack expertise in the client's problem area. Sometimes they must refer because the client's problem is too close to the counselor's own growing or hurting edges. Sometimes referral is appropriate simply because of a values gap between client and counselor.

Additionally, there is the importance of recognizing and applying concepts in their appropriate context. When we speak to clients about original sin and their responsibilities, to what client population are we speaking? Hopefully, we are not speaking to rape or incest victims. We need to avoid blaming the victim by ill-timed theologizing in the wrong context. Clients will receive enough of this pain without a counselor's help.

A fifth pitfall is the vulnerability of particular client populations. Women clients raised in a sexist society are vulnerable to abuses of power by male therapists, for example. Clients who have a different ethnic background than their counselors are vulnerable if the counselor is not sensitive to cross-cultural issues.

A sixth pitfall is the danger that the therapist or client may blur the two roles of the pastoral counselor. Though there is a unity in concerns and healing issues,

pastoral counselors must be clear when they are speaking from a personal perspective, from a church teaching role, or from the role of a specially trained and educated counselor.

Possibilities

One possibility is that pastoral counselors can share with the client a framework of meaning and some clearly shared core or beginning values. Thus, they will be able to talk and think in some of the same central metaphors and stories.

A second possibility comes from the rich resources within our scriptural, theological and religious tradition. Some of these resources are presented later below.

A third possibility comes from the central importance placed on love and acceptance in Christianity.

A fourth possibility is that the therapist's religious perspective could lead to seeing oneself as the agent or vessel of healing rather than as the healer, who is God.

A fifth possibility comes from the images of wholeness and health in scripture and tradition. Imagery of the kingdom, the new creation, etc., can provide hope and vision. Such imagery should be used carefully, however, so as to provide hope rather than to be a source of frustration that one can never reach such goals.

Scriptural and Theological Resources

D. Bruce Roberts has written an intriguing essay about power and servanthood in leadership models. In his discussion of how listening can be empowering, Roberts draws on

Pauline imagery of the church as the body of Christ and of each part of the body as having its own important gifts.

Listening is the skill through which persons are empowered. They are empowered as they see that they have influence. . . . They are empowered as they are treated with respect and listened to as adults. . . . Empowering through listening is consistent with the Christian tradition.¹

Roberts also provides a useful summary of some gospel passages which link power and servanthood.

Both Mark and Matthew report Jesus saying, "You know that the rulers of the heathen have power over them, and the leaders have complete authority. This is, however, not the way it shall be among you. If one of you wants to be great, he must be the servant of the rest" (Mark 10:43-44 and Matthew 20:25-27). Luke has Jesus saying, "The leader must be like the servant . . . I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:26-270. John also carries the theme of servant leadership powerfully in the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet at the last supper and suggesting that each member of the community should do as he did and wash each others feet (John 13:1-17).²

One of the weaknesses of the authority/obedience model is that it usually does not take much account of individuality. It tends to require a conformity of thought and response which eliminates individual opinion and the expression of those opinions. In this light the scriptural assurances that God knows us, that God knows our stories and our needs and our uniquenesses are reassuring. Our relationship with God goes beyond simple command and obedience. Psalm 139 ("Oh Lord, thou has searched and known me!") is perhaps the most well known example of this. Jeremiah reports God saying (in Jer. 1:5) "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (RSV).

God's injunctions throughout the Old Testament on how the powerless in society should be treated also provide insight on the proper uses of power in society. Just as God used power to free the powerless slaves in Egypt, God's people are to remember their own experiences of powerlessness and to give to those in need of help, the sojourners, the widows, the poor.

Long Christian tradition enjoins us to live in the spirit of love and not in the spirit of the law. This suggests not the overthrow of the law but its supercession by love. Christians are expected to internalize the law and love rather than obey it as a burden. Taking this seriously, however, surely cannot mean that we must destroy our individuality in order to internalize laws. Only an authoritarian conception of religion would demand the obliteration of the individual to accede to God's laws.

In both Old and New Testaments the people of God are enjoined to love God with all their heart, soul, and mind. This must require keeping alive and developing our hearts, our minds and our souls. Thus, we can not simply discard our hearts, minds, and souls in order to obey commands which run counter to our hearts, minds and soul. As usual when dealing with obedience, the issue of pride comes up. Though it may be difficult to form guidelines for determining when the line between pride and the recognition and acceptance of God given abilities has been crossed, it is important to recognize at least that a tension does exist.

The Old Testament presents several images of people of God arguing with God or God's representatives. Abraham questions and then haggles with God over whether God should really destroy all the inhabitants of Sodom. Jacob wrestles with an angel to receive a blessing. Moses suggests God has made a mistake in choosing to send Moses to Egypt. Job not only decries God's unjust behavior towards him but goes on to vilify God. These men are some of the "heros" of our faith.

Rosemary Radford Ruether has made some interesting comments about the prevalence of the parent image of God in Christianity. Her comments seem a perfect echo of some of Fromm's criticisms about the role of power/authority in Christianity. Ruether notes that parental images for God (Mother, Father) are a positive symbol of roots and of a sense of "being grounded in the universe in those who have gone before, who underlie our existence."³ There is a flip side to this parental imagery for God, however. And this flip-side interpretation has proven too often to be the norm of interpretation.

But the parent model for the divine has negative resonance as well. It suggests a kind of permanent parent-child relationship to God. God becomes a neurotic parent who does not want us to grow up. To become autonomous and responsible for our own lives is the gravest sin against God. Patriarchal theology uses the parent image for God to prolong spiritual infantilism as virtue and to make autonomy and assertion of free will a sin.⁴

In an article entitled "Stewardship: From Servants/Slaves to Joint-Heirs"⁵ Dan Rhoades makes some help-

ful comments relative to issues of power and authority. In the joint-heir model God's lordship is not that of a master-king who commands obedience, rather God's lordship is revealed to be a gracious "liberality and justice." It is, in fact, humans' "distrustful alienation from God and neighbor" which creates problems. Stewardship in such a model "does not entail mere obedience ... It calls us to integrity, to a pattern of mature responsibility."⁶

H. R. Niebuhr's development of the ideas of the responsible self or "man-as-answerer" are also helpful in dealing with issues of power and authority in relation to God. In dealing with the paradox of law and gospel Niebuhr questions the "grand hypothesis" that obedience is the most useful category for considering Christian living.⁷ Niehbuhr observes that obedience is one kind of response, after all, to an action of some kind upon us. We are always responding to other actions upon us at the same time, however. Further, he observes that

obedience and disobedience are more dependent on our interpretation of the intention of the one who commands than on our understanding of the law itself.⁸

This notion of the importance of the perception of the intent of the command is particularly significant when we reflect on the many Psalms that speak of the generosity of God in providing the Jews with the law and of the Jews' joy and gratitude in response to this gift. Perhaps this different response explains why many Christians treat command-

ments so much more legalistically than many Jews.

Niebuhr's final observation on the issue of obedience is to observe that the gospel

as the declaration of divine action requires response no less than does commandment, though this response⁹ is not obedience but confidence and loyalty.

This sounds very much like both the Old Testament or Jewish response to the law and also like Rhoades' description of the response of joint-heirs.

NOTES

Chapter 5

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⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Dan Rhoades, "Stewardship: From Servants/Slaves to Joint-Heirs," Impact, [Claremont, Ca.: Disciples Seminary Foundation] no. 13 (1984): 6-16.

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⁷ H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1963), 131.

⁸ Ibid., 136.

⁹ Ibid.

CHAPTER 6

The Next Step

A Step Back

Before taking the next step, let us step back once more to review a problem area. Overcoming separateness and maintaining individuality has proven to be a difficult concept to convey in the abstract. It is equally difficult to "prove" how such a thing can happen. There is an element of subjective judgment here which cannot be bypassed. Certainly the idea of achieving union while maintaining individuality is somewhat paradoxical. This paradox cannot be completely overcome. Let us try to make the paradox a bit more intelligible, though.

In The Art of Loving Erich Fromm describes two ways of attempting to know "the secret" of a living thing. One way of knowing is through destruction, the other through love. A child pulling the wings off of a butterfly is attempting to know the secret of the butterfly. This way always fails because it destroys the object of knowing. Fromm suggests that love provides a way of knowing which doesn't destroy the object of our knowledge.¹ The recognition in modern physics that an "observer effect" changes what we observe even at a sub-atomic level, gives some support to the notion of our relatedness to all around us and to the inability to

"know" something apart from participating in relationship with it.

How this relational perspective can affect things on a practical level can be explored with an example. If a husband and wife are arguing and each one is concerned with defending themself and maintaining their self-esteem or prestige, both of them will lose the argument. Both will become defensive and probably engage in denial. If someone "wins" the argument the relationship will suffer as well as the self esteem of the "loser." If the "winner" truly cares about the "loser," the "winner" will regret (or feel guilty) about damaging the self esteem of the "loser." The "loser" may also resent the cruelty of the "winner." Not a favorable outcome for anyone!

A relational perspective would see this whole argument differently. Rather than focusing on defending their own interests, husband and wife would focus on sustaining the relationship. Information gathering, rather than blaming and denial would be the program. Hasn't the individual disappeared in this model though? Not really.

Concern for the relationship includes concern for the individuals within the relationship. The relationship cannot remain healthy if one partner is unhappy. If the wife were to accede to a request from her husband which really infringed on her individuality, the wife would come to resent her sacrifice. The husband, in a relational orientation, would want to know if his wife was building up resent-

ments, because resentments eat away at the quality of the relationship.

The Steps We've Taken

Through our exploration of psychologists and theologians, we have seen the necessity for reconsidering and redefining the concepts of power, authority and obedience and relatedness. Traditional models and definitions of these terms can be damaging to certain vulnerable populations, particularly within the context of a counseling relationship.

Traditional models and definitions for power, authority and obedience often set love and power against each other as opposites. It is important both within society and particularly within counseling relationships to reunite love and power in both thought and action. Christians, whether counselors or social activists, can no longer claim to act with love but not with power.

In general, our journey has been more helpful in presenting negative definitions of power, authority and obedience than in providing positive ones. Perhaps it is important to say here that positive expressions of power, authority and obedience work at maintaining mutuality and relationship even during situations of stress. In other words, such an expression never retreats from relationship when applying sanctions in other words. It remains contextual, and the relatedness of those involved is part of the context.

We have noted that counselors must take special note of power imbalances in their relationships with their clients and in their clients' relationships with others. The issues of power are therapy issues which should be mutually explored rather than hidden. The working out of such issues between counselor and client, helps restore clients to their own power and may also provide role-modeling for the client in handling power problems outside of the counseling relationship.

Stepping Forward

One next step for moving forward on these issues would be to attempt, on a large scale, to educate our laity about the risks and potentials of counseling. People need to become informed and educated consumers of counseling before they find themselves in a crisis which requires counseling. From the pulpit, in church school classes, in small groups and in one on one encounters people should be educated about not giving up their power. People who give themselves away don't understand that God loves them. People who need to have power over others also lack confidence in God's love for them.

Another next step for pastors is to learn about the therapists in their area. Pastors should keep informed about how counseling is going for parishioners who have been referred. Keeping informed about how counseling is going does not mean being an armchair counselor or asking counselors to strain their confidentiality. Counselors who

misuse power tend to do so repeatedly. Learn who to avoid and who to send people to.

A final next step is to reflect critically on the interplay between our beliefs and our social context. When we preach and teach, do we present models that enliven and empower people or models that make people more vulnerable to victimization?

Obedience must come to refer to an inner voice of integrity. The God within must be in contact with our true inner selves. A conception of God which is completely externalized has many problems. Or as Goethe once put it, "What sort of a God would it be, who only pushed from without?"²

NOTES

CHAPTER 6

1 Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), 30-31.

2 Fox, 89.

8

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